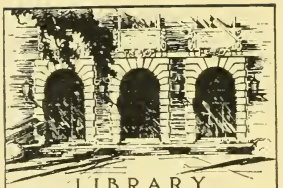

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A WOMAN OF MIND.

A WOMAN OF MIND.

A Novel.

BY

MRS. ADOLPHE SMITH,

AUTHOR OF "LOVE WITHOUT WINGS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE & RIVINGTON,
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A WOMAN OF MIND.

CHAPTER I.

The rain was pattering remorselessly upon the broad walk, upon the sturdy shrubs and trees in front of Clevedon House—pattering with the dreary pertinacity of autumn rain. Far as the eye could reach, the sky was one dull even grey, and it was hard to realize that the sun had ever shone on the swaying trees, that the sky had ever formed a blue background to their green luxuriance. The

air was damp and chilly, and a cheery fire blazed in the drawing-room of Clevedon House.

Silvia Clevedon stood at the window, looking out upon the dreary expanse of wet forest land, with an intentness that showed she was too absorbed in thought to notice or heed the weather. Her face had grown paler and thinner since the spring, and her heavy black garments gave a stately solemnity to her appearance, that would have startled those who had only known her in her lighter moments. There was a strange stillness about the house; the very air of the rooms seemed oppressive, as well as chilly, and the dreariness of the rain seemed a fitting accompaniment to the general gloom.

Silvia hardly knew how long she had been standing pale and motionless at the window, when the door opened, and Gilbert Jocelyn entered quietly.

"Do I disturb you, Silvia?" he asked, gently.

"No, not at all," she replied, never turning her face towards him.

He sat down by the fire, and, as he glanced at her, could not help, even at such a moment, noticing how handsome she looked in her desolation. He waited for a time to see if she would address him; and at last, finding that she said nothing, he crossed over to the window and stood beside her.

"Silvia!" he began, "would it be so hard for you to carry out your father's wishes? I am sorry, for your sake, that

the admiral should have made such a stipulation in his will; but, for my own part, I care for nothing if I can really get you. Can you not find it in your heart to let things be as your father intended? Do you dislike me?"

"How can you be so foolish, Gilbert?" said Silvia. "How can I dislike you? You must know well enough that I love you exactly as if you were my brother. I have always thought of you, and treated you as if you had been my brother, and can seriously assure you that I never looked at you in any other light. My darling mother, just before she died, two months ago"—here Silvia's voice trembled painfully—"reminded me that you would be a brother to me; and I never thought that my father would

throw me at you, so that you feel yourself compelled to ask me to be your wife. I am glad that my mother is not here to know of the indignity."

"Silvia, Silvia!" cried Jocelyn, "don't talk about being thrown at me, and the indignity, and my being compelled to propose to you. If you only knew what I have felt all these months, you would not say such things. I daren't begin to tell you all that I have thought and hoped."

"Don't tell me, Gilbert," said Silvia, gravely. "It can do you no good, and it cannot change me."

"But you must not make up your mind against me," pleaded Jocelyn. "Perhaps presently you will get more used to the idea, and all will come right."

"It is of no use deceiving you," said Silvia, decisively. "All will never come right in that sense. We are perfectly unsuited to each other. I am sure that in your heart you would not thoroughly and entirely love me, and I am sure that I should never love you as I wish to love my husband if ever I marry. So let that question drop. My poor father's intentions were kind enough, undoubtedly. He thought he was making everything smooth and easy for me; he only forgot to consider my feelings—that is all."

"But what are we to do about the property?" cried Jocelyn, in some perturbation.

"My dear Gilbert, that is very simply settled," said Silvia. "It is yours henceforth. I cannot and will not touch a penny of it."

"You make me doubly, trebly unhappy," said Jocelyn. "Do you know why your father has left his property to me? Shall I read you the passage respecting it in that long letter to me that was found with his will?"

Silvia nodded her assent; and he took a letter from his pocket, and read a passage that ran as follows:—

"I leave the whole of my property to you, my dear Gilbert, because I am afraid of it reaching my daughter's hands, when it would inevitably, because of her extraordinary views, be broken up. Of course, I know that Silvia will be well cared for. I know your sentiments towards her—did you not confess them to me?—and I am sure that she fully responds. A stray glance of hers

one night, when we had been discussing the dismissal of one of the servants, strongly impressed me with the belief that she would be happy with you. Therefore, I leave you my fortune, knowing that she will enjoy all that she has been in the habit of enjoying, and that she will, at the same time, be unable to divide my land among the labourers, as I presume her sympathies would incline her to do. She knows my wishes as to her choice of a husband, and will, under all circumstances, and in consideration of contingencies, be content to abide by my decision."

Here Silvia put her hand upon Jocelyn's arm. "I have heard quite enough," she said. "My poor father shows his natural opinion of women in that paragraph.

He never could understand that some of us, at least, have heart, and dignity, and disinterestedness, and he could not appreciate the extreme painfulness of the position in which he has placed me. He might, however, have known me better than to suppose that I should accept a husband to whom I was awarded with the property, like an odd lot at a sale. The position would be as unpleasant for you also, Gilbert, as for me. No man likes to have a wife thrust down his throat in so summary a manner. You would like, I suppose, to have had the excitement of proposing yourself, instead of having it done for you, with due legal formality, through a will. It was unkind of my father to treat me with as little courtesy as if I had been a bale of goods,

and to force me to marry you against my will, or to resign myself to complete beggary!"

"Don't talk about beggary, Silvia," said Jocelyn, in a low voice. "If you cannot allow yourself to carry out one portion of your father's will, I certainly will not carry out the rest. If you are not to be my wife, I will not take the property the admiral has left me. You must stop here, Silvia, as the owner and proprietress of the whole place, and——"

"Gilbert, we must not waste our time in talking nonsense," said Silvia, quietly. "Now, listen to me. I will not touch one penny of my father's money that does not belong to me. He has left me three hundred pounds, has he not, for myself? Well, I will take those three hundred

pounds. You shall draw a cheque for me to the value of them this evening, so that I may have the sum immediately, without waiting for the legal delays and flourishes. That is all I shall ever take. And as for living here, you know that I am not likely to fall in with that arrangement. I shall leave to-morrow morning and shall go to London. I have some humble, honest friends there, who will be glad to receive me while I discover some branch of work in which I can exert myself. You know this is no new idea of mine; I have often felt that I should be happier if I were busily employed, and were doing my best to earn my own living. Now, especially, I am sure the change would be good for me. The troubles and distress of the last few months have

been enough to weigh one to the ground, and this last blow decides me. I shall go to London to-morrow morning."

"No, by Heaven!" cried Jocelyn, "that you shall not do? Do you think I could remain here, living on the fat of the land, while you are toiling at some wretched form of labour in London, disgracing your family name by working for your living? Do you think I could stop on in your house, while you are stifling in some miserable lodging? Do you think that I can go on enjoying myself, while you, whom I love better than all the world, whom I have loved ever since I can remember, are struggling for your daily bread. It is cruel of you, Silvia, to treat me as you are doing. You positively refuse to have anything to do with me;

you refuse me, when I pay you the greatest compliment a man can pay a woman, with contempt; you profess to consider me as your brother; and yet you fly from the house you choose to consider mine, and will accept of no help of any kind, preferring to talk about beggary and working for your living."

And Jocelyn went back to the fireplace, and, planting his elbows on the mantlepiece, buried his face in his hands.

"Don't you understand," said Silvia, presently, "that I cannot live in your house? Of course, you will answer that you would be in London, or away somewhere; but the fact would remain that I should be a burden on you. Now, you know that I do not approve of any one being a burden to any one else, if such

a thing be avoidable, and I will never consent to weigh you down with the weight of my expenditure. Also, you are no apostle, my dear Gilbert, and I am certain that you would be the first to lose your confidence when you found the tongues of the whole world wagging against you. I have asked you to help me. I want you to write me a cheque for my three hundred pounds to-night—beyond that I can ask nothing."

"And you mean to tell me," cried Jocelyn, turning round to face her as she advanced to the fireplace, "that you are going to work—that you are going to slave, and drudge, and toil for your bread? I have asked you—I have implored you—to be my wife, my adored wife; to take your place at the head of this house; to be

mistress of everything that I possess; to make me better and more clever, if you can. I don't expect you to love me passionately at first, but when you found how much I really love you, it would come at last, perhaps, if you tried hard."

"You surely do not wish me to marry you for the sake of a home?" said Silvia. "And I cannot profess to believe that love would crop up, ultimately, exactly in the right place. I believe that, on the contrary, it would and does crop up, as a rule, in the wrong place. When you think it all over quietly, Gilbert, you will see that I am right in putting any idea of marriage between us totally aside. Just consider how terribly our tastes are at variance; remember how we have disagreed over the smallest trifles, as well

as over the gravest subjects. We have not one taste in common; our opinions on all matters, from politics to millinery, are diametrically opposed. I thought you felt this as strongly as I do, and that is why my father's scheme for the adjustment of his property seems to me almost ludicrous."

Here Jocelyn started as if he had been stung, and then said, hastily, "I am going now, Silvia. I can think it all over better at the Eagle; and every word you say seems to sink into me. I shall come round to-morrow morning, of course."

"Remember that I shall leave quite early," said Silvia.

"I have no fear of that," he answered. "You will think better of your scheme

to-morrow morning, and will see that you need not fly from the house as if it were plague-ridden. I cannot and will not let you go."

Silvia smiled a faint, flickering smile, and said, "If you wish to see me to-morrow, you must come early."

Jocelyn said nothing further, and shook her hand and departed in silence.

Left alone by the fireside, Silvia's thoughts travelled rapidly and at random. All the events of the past six months recurred, in some confusion at times, to her mind. Her mother's failing health, that forced them to leave town at the very opening of the season; the constant wearying anxiety of the four months during which she lingered on, with one foot in the grave; the terrible

shock of the sudden death at night in her sleep; the admiral's gradual pining and decay; his death, just two months after that of his wife; the shock of the will, read to her only a few days back;—all these points came upon her again and again, the dominant impression being that of grief for her mother. Strongly as her mother's tastes and opinions differed from her own, her filial love had been, undoubtedly, her deepest feeling.

Her mother had remonstrated with her, and reproved her severely almost day by day; but she had, at the same time, in her inmost heart, been proud of her daughter's beauty, and independence of spirit, and power of thought. During the last few months of her life, she had

clung to Silvia with all the tenacity of a weak nature leaning on a strong one. Silvia had been her refuge, her hope, her comforter, and had done her best to soothe her mother's physical suffering, and to soften the sorrow of a dying creature that has no desire to die. Life had been very smooth and easy to Mrs. Clevedon, and she had no wish to give it up. She had not even the weariness of existence, brought about by intense suffering, towards the end; she faded away merely, and her regrets for the home and friends she was leaving were the more bitter, because of that gradual fading. During the two or three months before her death, however, she became doubly, trebly attached to, and proud of, her daughter; and, with a dim fore-

warning of Silvia's future, she felt glad that her courage was so indomitable, her strength of purpose so unswerving. Day by day, as she lingered on, she saw that Silvia grew graver and quieter; and she was pleased to think that the enthusiastic exuberance of her nature was calming somewhat. She did not recognize that it was the hourly, daily anxiety that sobered Silvia, and tamed her for a time into something like submission. At last, however, the anxiety was over. With a sudden attack of breathlessness, and a few unconscious, gasping sighs, Mrs. Clevedon passed away into the great final sleep, leaving a desolate daughter and an angrily sorrowful husband to mourn her.

The admiral took his wife's death as

a personal affront. He could not understand that she should be taken away, and that he should be unable to retain her. She was his wife, and it was most unjustifiable that the laws of life and death should apply to Admiral Clevedon's wife, as forcibly as to the wife of the humblest servant on the estate. His resentment at Mrs. Clevedon's death was so great, that it seemed to overbalance his grief; at the same time, the two sentiments together worried him so continually, that he had a return of his old liver complaint, from which he died, before those around him had grown accustomed to the fact of his wife's death. He had been kinder and gentler to his daughter, during the two months that elapsed between the death of his

wife and of himself, than he had appeared for a very long time, and though one or two violent interludes had occurred, the violence had been on his side, Silvia answering not a word to his angry remarks on her friends and opinions. Two or three evenings before his death, he had called her to his bedside, and had said—

"We have quarrelled sometimes, haven't we, Silvia? but, you know, child, I have always loved you in my heart."

"I hope so, father," Silvia answered.

"And I have tried to do my best for your happiness, as you will see," he continued. "I know which way your sympathies lie, and I have managed accordingly. I can leave you in perfect peace of mind, for Gilbert will protect

you, and you will not feel any difference of any kind."

"I shall feel a difference, dear father," said Silvia, gravely; "I cannot help feeling a difference; but I dare say all will be right with regard to your arrangement, and to Gilbert. He is a good friend, and will help me to fulfil your wishes. But don't talk of all these things now; you will be well and up again in a day or two, father dear."

The admiral shook his head, and in a day or two he died.

Silvia's surprise when she heard her father's will read by the family lawyer, after the funeral, was great. She heard it through to the end—heard the statements that her father's property was left unconditionally to Gilbert Jocelyn; that

she, as the wife of Jocelyn, would enjoy all the benefits of the fortune as she had hitherto done; that it was her father's particular wish that no change should be made in the mode and manner of keeping up the estate;—she heard the list of small legacies, headed by the bestowal of three hundred pounds only upon herself; and when the reading of the will was over, she honoured the solemn representative of the law and the several gentlemen present with a deep bow, said quite calmly, "Mr. Jocelyn, you will see to our friends," and left the room.

She had one or two long discussions with Jocelyn during the week that followed the reading of the will, all taking the same turn, and leading to no definite conclusion; she had, however, in

the course of these dreary days, made up her mind to the independent line of action she had described.

She was roused now from her painful thoughts by the entrance of one of the maids, asking in which room Miss Clevedon would dine. She answered, briefly, that Mr. Jocelyn had gone, and that she needed no dinner. The maid departed, and Silvia resumed her steady contemplation of the fire. In a moment, however, the door opened, and the housekeeper, a genial, motherly woman of the old school, appeared. Silvia looked round quickly, and, seeing her, bade her enter.

"I came to see how it is that you don't want any dinner, Miss Clevedon," said the housekeeper, advancing towards Silvia, and glancing at her with some concern.

"My dear Mrs. Wilden," said Silvia, "how do you expect me to sit down calmly, and go through a dinner here alone, when I am so preoccupied? To begin with, I feel as if the food I eat in this house would choke me."

"Well, I think that's natural, I must say, my dear," said Mrs. Wilden; "but you must get over that, and the sooner the better."

"But I shall not get over it at all," said Silvia. "I shall leave this place to-morrow morning, and most likely shall never return to it."

"To-morrow morning!" cried the housekeeper. "Have you quite decided for to-morrow?"

"Yes, Mrs. Wilden," replied Silvia; "I have quite made up my mind. You

know the conditions of my father's will, for you, with all the servants, heard them read the other day. Every word of that will grates upon me, not because my father did not leave me his money—though I regret that, for so much good might have been done with it—but because he passes me over to Mr. Jocelyn so unceremoniously. But it was never my intention to marry Mr. Jocelyn; and, as I cannot accept his money and live in his house, I am going away to-morrow. I am free, and I am strong, and I am not afraid of the world."

"Oh, my dear young lady," said the housekeeper, taking one of Silvia's hands in her agitation, "don't do that! Don't be rash about it. Just think! What are you going to find in the place of what you

lose? How can a young lady born and bred like you go into the world all by yourself? If you were ugly, too, it wouldn't be so bad; but so young and so handsome as you are! What will people say?"

"As to that, I do not care one jot what people say," said Silvia. "I only want to do what is right according to my own ideas. No one can do more than that. And just ask yourself, Mrs. Wilden, what people would say if I were to consent to live in Mr. Jocelyn's house."

"Poor Mr. Jocelyn!" murmured the housekeeper. "What a pity that it has all turned out so! Does he know that you are going to-morrow?"

"I told him," said Silvia, "but he seemed hardly to believe it. And now,

Mrs. Wilden, I should like you to tell the servants that I am going, and to tell Rogers that I want the waggonette with the hood on, to take me to the station to-morrow morning. The train I intend to take leaves at half-past ten, so the waggonette should be round here by ten. Will you do this for me, please, and then you may send me in a cup of tea?"

"Oh, my dear, my dear," exclaimed the housekeeper, putting her hand on Silvia's arm, "I can't bear to think of your going to London all alone, so young and so handsome! But then I know you're brave and strong, and have got wisdom enough for twenty in your head. It's a cruel blow to you, any way, poor dear!"

Here Silvia bent forward and kissed

the housekeeper's cheek, bringing thereto a vivid flush of pleasure and embarrassment, and said, "Thank you heartily, Mrs. Wilden, for your sympathy, which does me positive good. When I am in London, I will write to you and let you know how I am getting on."

And Mrs. Wilden hastened out of the room, her eyes dim with tears, and her kindly nature thoroughly disturbed by the rush of events in the family she had watched and tended for more than twenty years.

In the course of the evening, a messenger left a letter for Silvia. It bore the arms of the Eagle Hotel on the envelope, and was addressed in Jocelyn's handwriting. On opening it, Silvia found that it contained only the cheque for

three hundred pounds of which she had spoken, and on the tongue of the envelope was written—

"You said you wanted this to-night, so I send it you. I shall see you to-morrow.

"Yours ever,

"GILBERT."

"Poor Gilbert!" murmured Silvia. "It would be better that he should come too late to-morrow!"

CHAPTER II.

The sun was shining mildly the following morning, when Gilbert Jocelyn sauntered moodily enough from the Eagle, and bent his steps toward Clevedon House. The way lay along a pretty, sheltered road, past the picturesque cemetery. There was a short cut through the graveyard; but, as a rule, Jocelyn never profited by it, for he heartily disliked graves and cemeteries, and anything that he considered to be mournful in idea or association. This morning, however, he felt gloomy and

depressed, and he turned by the little gate into the happy green field of rest with a half-reckless idea that nothing could make him sadder than he was already, therefore he might as well have the benefit of the shorter road. He strode along the narrow pathway without looking either to the right or to the left; and it was not till he reached the secluded corner, sheltered by a cluster of pines, where he had stood, only a few days before, at the head of the grave of his old friend and protector, who had been like a father to him ever since he could remember, that he raised his eyes and glanced around him. The stillness and serenity were profound; not a breath of wind shook the branches of the trees, not a rustle of leaves or swaying of boughs

could be heard, and only the joyous singing of the birds fell upon the ear. The autumn sunlight played upon the white ombstones; it shone upon the grass, glistening with moisture from yesterday's rain and the night dew; it lit up the clustering flowers on the graves, and illuminated some of the redundant gold-lettered inscriptions; and finally, as Jocelyn turned to give a last look at his old friend's grave, a few yards from him, the sunlight shone upon a half-kneeling, half-crouching figure close by in black, and crowned with a mass of bright brown hair.

"Can that be Silvia," he muttered to himself, "at this early hour?" (It was nearly eight o'clock.)

He moved gently aside to get a better

view of the mourner, and saw then that it was undoubtedly Silvia. She had stretched her arms upon the cold stone that marked her mother's resting-place, and had bent her head upon them; and as Jocelyn stood looking at her, he could see the curve of the lip and chin, and the statuesque throat and head. He saw also how pale she was, how her cheeks seemed to have become almost sunken, how thin and long were the white hands lying on the stone, and some vague uneasiness fluttered in his throat and dimmed his eyes as he looked. For a long time he stood watching her. He did not dare speak to her; he felt that she wished to be alone; and at last, with a lingering tender contemplation of that silent figure, he resolved to go away and leave her to

herself, to let her indulge her grief to her heart's content. "She will be the better for it afterwards," he thought; and with a sigh he turned away, and, stepping with the utmost care that she might not be disturbed, retraced his steps, and returned to the Eagle, resolved to breakfast there before he went round to Clevedon House. He did but scant justice, however, to the munificent fare of the old inn; he was too preoccupied to enjoy anything but a cigar and solitude.

In the mean time, Silvia was roused from her sorrowful absorption by the deep tones of the church clock striking the hour, and recalling to her the little time left of her old life. She rose wearily to her feet, picked up her hat from the

grass where it had lain, gazed earnestly for a last time at the stone that covered her father and mother, and turned away quickly, her eyes filling with tears again and again as she walked home and remembered that she was leaving everything that she held most dear, that was connected with her early life—her home and its associations, the places that she knew inch by inch, the good village people whom she had known for years. But keenly as she regretted the disruption, it never occurred to her to revoke her decision, to take that which Jocelyn offered her, and remain in the full possession of all to which she had been accustomed.

When her solitary breakfast was over at Clevedon House, Silvia sent for Mrs.

Wilden, and gave her a few general directions.

"You know, Mrs. Wilden," she said, "Mr. Jocelyn will want you to stay here to look after the place, and he will look to you to keep things as my father wished. And even if he should bring back a wife one day with whom you did not agree, I am delighted to think that my father has left you a trifle to remember him by. There are many of my friends in the village to whom I have not said good-bye; will you tell them all from me that I left too suddenly to be able to look in once more at every familiar cottage? You may tell them the whole truth as to the circumstances of my leaving, Mrs. Wilden; it is a good thing to show that every one is not

willing to sell their truth and dignity for a comfortable home and fine income."

"But what shall I say to Mr. Jocelyn?" asked the housekeeper, tremulous with grief and excitement.

"I will write a few words for you to give to him, if he does not come before I go," said Silvia. "And now I am going to take a turn round the garden, and a last look at the horses and dogs, before the waggonette is at the door."

She gathered up her long skirts, and walked with her usual quiet dignity out into the grounds, round the spacious lawn and flower-beds; she went into the stables, and patted the arched necks and smooth coats of her favourites; she turned to the dog-kennels, and the faithful creatures came bounding about her, eager

for a touch of her hand and the sound of her voice. One of them, a fine black retriever, came to her and rubbed his head against her fingers, and looked up at her with wistful, imploring eyes. He seemed conscious that something was wrong, and tried to express his sympathy in mute action and expression. As Silvia turned to leave the dogs' domain, the retriever, with a subdued whine, followed her.

"No, no, Tartar," said Silvia, stooping to pat the dog's head, and to look into those earnest, anxious eyes; "you mustn't follow me to-day. We have had our last run together, I'm afraid, and you will soon forget me. Good-bye, my poor fellow; you must go back now."

She kissed his glossy fur, gave him a last caressing touch with her hand, and then sent him off.

By the time her final survey was over, the waggonette was at the door. She went up to her room while her trunks were placed in the vehicle, she wrote a few lines to Jocelyn, she glanced in at the familiar rooms, and then, all ready equipped for her journey, she came down the broad staircase to the hall. As she stood still and looked around her, the tears sprang quickly to her eyes. The servants of the house had gathered there, with the utmost concern on their faces, and Silvia needed no words from them to know how sorry they were to lose her. When she had given her note for Jocelyn to Mrs. Wilden, she said to them all—

"I am very sorry indeed to leave you, my friends, but there is no help for it, as

you know. I hope you will get along well here, however, when I am gone, and I am sure that if you stay with Mr. Jocelyn, you will have nothing to complain of."

As she spoke, she held out her hand to one of the maids who stood close beside her, and then all the servants pressed round her, hoping for a generous clasp of the fingers from their young mistress, to whom they each owed so much thoughtful kindness and consideration. She said good-bye to them one after the other, and when she turned at last to Mrs. Wilden, her face was perfectly colourless from excitement. With a few hasty parting words to her, to which Mrs. Wilden responded with a tearful, hysterical "God bless you, my

dear young lady," Silvia turned swiftly away, without trusting herself to look once more at the place that had been her home for so many years; sprang into the waggonette, and telling Rogers to drive her to the station, threw herself into its furthest corner, covering her face with her hands, that she might see no more.

As the horses started off, a long wailing howl fell upon the air. It startled the servants in the hall; it reached Silvia in the waggonette, and the ghost of a smile crossed her face as she recognized Tartar's whine, and knew that, as it was his habit to attend her in her drives, he was wondering now, as he heard the sound of wheels, why he was left behind. In a moment the carriage had turned a corner, and with Tartar's desolate moan

in her ears, Silvia left her old home. The station was at a fair distance, but the road seemed short enough to Silvia on this occasion; the moments flew by to her mind. She had hardly reached the platform, when the train came dashing up. In an instant Rogers had secured a carriage, had put her wraps in for her, and as he stood at the door when she was comfortably seated, listening to her kind words, "Good-bye, Rogers; I hope you will all keep prosperous and happy," the guard gave the signal, and shouted "Stand back there!" to the various persons talking at the carriage doors, the engine gave a preliminary snort, and the train was off. Silvia Clevedon was on her road to London, alone and in poverty, yet rich in the consciousness of her own strength of

purpose, independence, and desire to do good!

About an hour after Silvia's departure, Jocelyn started once more for Clevedon House. He passed the lodge gates, with his usual nod and smile to the gate-keeper. He did not enter the house by the hall door, but went round to the lawn on which the breakfast-room opened, and, as was his habit, effected an entrance by the windows. He looked round him. Not only was Silvia not there, but there was a curious, bare look about the place. A few stray books that had lain upon the sideboard were gone; a pile of letters that had filled a china tray on the mantlepiece were gone also. Jocelyn noticed these trivial points in a moment, and, with an odd sensation of coming evil, went from

the breakfast-room to the drawing-room, from the drawing-room to the library; and not finding her in either place, went to the housekeeper's room, where Mrs. Clevedon had been in the habit of repairing after breakfast, and called at the door for Mrs. Wilden. That lady came hurrying out when she heard his voice.

"Where is Miss Clevedon?" he asked anxiously. "Is she out?"

"Yes; she is indeed, sir," replied Mrs. Wilden, hurriedly. "She has gone to London, and she left this note for you."

Without a word, Jocelyn took the letter Mrs. Wilden had drawn from her pocket, and went into the breakfast-room, and sat down beside the open window to read it. It was very short:—

"DEAR GILBERT" (it ran)—

"I am not sorry that you have not come round this morning before my departure, for we should only have distressed each other needlessly. I shall never change my mind with regard to that vital question between us, and the sooner you forget it all, the better. I should be miserable, indeed, if I did not know that your love for me is, like my love for you, purely fraternal. My father's strange method of providing for me may have led you, from your very chivalry as a gentleman, to fancy you really loved me as a man should love his wife, but I am sure that the time will come when you will thank me for refusing to marry you. I have told you frankly that I love you as a very dear brother, as an old playmate and

ally, but in no other manner; and you could not respect me if, after that, I accepted you for the sake of a home and money, in the hope that love might come eventually.

"You know how often I have said that I should like to earn my own living in some way, and, believe me, it will do me good to try. I do not tell you where I am gone, because then you would ferret me out, and would not leave me to carry on my own plans. Now, don't distress yourself about me, I beg of you. Remember that nothing could please me better than that which I am doing. When I have succeeded somewhat, I will let you know—that is, if your wife will not object, for you will be married by that time. Good-bye, dear Gilbert,

"Yours affectionately,

"SILVIA."

Jocelyn sat as if stunned for some moments after he had read the letter. He was in a maze of conflicting thoughts. That Silvia would ultimately have gone to London, and would have, to use his generic term for her expeditions and enterprises, "pottered among the poor," he had had no doubt. He had said to himself that, as she was the most extraordinary person he had ever met, it was natural that she should do the most extraordinary things, according to his lights. But he had never thought that she would go off the week after her father's funeral, and leave no clue as to her whereabouts. What would become of her? he asked himself. She had only three hundred pounds, and they would very quickly go, and then what would happen to her. He

knew that she would never apply to her friends for money; and as for work, he did not much believe in ladies' powers for anything beyond dressing and flirting, and, though he knew Silvia to be an exceptional person, he could hardly really believe that she would ever be able to make money by her own exertions. He was bitterly disappointed to find that she had escaped him, and yet mingled with the sorrow was something like pride of her disinterested and high-spirited conduct. The provisions of the admiral's will had mortified Jocelyn as well as Silvia. As Silvia had remarked, he would have preferred to have asked her to be his wife at his own discretion, and he had hardly dared expect that Silvia, of all persons in the world, would accept

the propositions dictated by her father. Therefore, while he was inexpressibly distressed at the fact that she had gone to London—he knew not to whom or to what part—he could not help admiring the spirit that had prompted her to action.

"Well, there are not many fellows who would grumble," he muttered to himself, as he sauntered back to the Eagle, Silvia's letter carefully folded in his pocket, "at having a fine old house and a fair income left them, unencumbered with a wife; but I can't say that I like it. I shall never feel at ease in the place while Silvia is out in the world, working; and I don't see why Silvia should ever alter her mind about me, so as to make it all straight that way. The money

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and the house ought to be hers, and I'm sure I would gladly give it back to her; but I don't see who is to persuade her to consent to such a thing, when she has once made up her mind.

"There is one thing quite certain, however," he said, mentally, while smoking his cigar, after lunch, on the Eagle balcony. "I shall leave this place, immediately. I can't put up with Lyndwood any longer, and shall see if I can get over the whole affair at Homburg or Wiesbaden."

CHAPTER III.

The incident at the opera in the early spring made a profound impression upon Royle. It showed him the hollowness of the life he had been leading, the utter insecurity of the ground upon which he had been standing; and it seemed marvellous that some *contretemps* of the kind had never occurred before. There should be no opportunity for anything similar to occur again, he said to himself repeatedly. He was determined to fly no more false colours. His prestige should not

be that of money in future. He would work; he would make a name, he said to himself, so that ultimately Silvia should be proud of having known him. Without realizing the significance of the fact, he was conscious that Silvia was the dominant figure in all these bold and independent plans of his. Silvia's was the mind to be influenced, Silvia's was the opinion to be sought, Silvia's was the praise to which he aspired; and if he had known that Silvia would be beyond his reach when success came to him, the knowledge might have had a serious effect upon his brave resolves. But, fortunately, the wisest of us cannot read the future, or many of the great deeds of all time would have been left undone; and Royle went on boldly planning and

scheming, and hoping and dreaming. He worked hard, too; he was studying night and day, his brain ever on the alert, his mind ever occupied. He had had several violent discussions with his father before his position as a worker was recognized in Laurel Lodge; and on more than one occasion the contention had been gradually calmed by Mr. William Dawson, who sympathized strongly with his future brother-in-law, and whose loudly expressed sentiments had their due effect on Mr. Royle, because of the money that backed them.

"I tell you what it is, governor," said Mr. Dawson again and again to the father of his betrothed; "you ought to be proud of such a son. He's a brave, bold fellow, and he'll make a name, take

my word for it, that will do him far more credit than if he continued hanging on to the upper ten. Dawson, senior, is always enlarging on the advantages you enjoy in apparent unconsciousness, and foremost among them is the possession of a son who is independent enough to wish to work, when you only wish him to play. Don't you be too hard on young Philip, governor; let all the good in him come out."

At which Mr. Royle invariably tossed his head, and declared that all young men strove to uphold each other; but Dawson's remarks had their effect, notwithstanding.

Royle had given up his rooms in Regent Street, and had taken refuge in one of the streets that slope from the

Strand to the river. His father still made him an allowance, which had been fixed upon when the question of work had been really forced upon him, but it was only as much as would allow Royle to pursue his studies without breaking in upon his time in order to earn his daily bread. And in that alone he was still more favoured than the mass of workers, who are compelled to fritter themselves away for the necessities of life, leaving the great achievement of which they feel they are capable for a future time that only too often never comes. The painter has to spend his soul on "pot-boilers," while the magic canvas that shall stamp his name in the annals of glory is turned to the wall; the scientific student must dabble in vain and futile learning in

order to live, while the beneficent system that shall carry his reputation to posterity is growing bit by bit in his brain; the author must, perforce, write here, there, and everywhere, in snatches that later on he will rather not own, with a view of being at last able to conclude the *magnum opus* in his desk. But Royle had the inexpressible advantage of having his daily bread provided for him. He was able to give his whole soul to his work, and it may have been that the possibility of absorbing himself entirely in the one range of ideas and thoughts was intimately concerned with the result. He was so determined to succeed that he lost not the smallest opportunity that he believed to be conducive to success. He pored over volume after volume for

the elucidation of some trivial detail; he consulted well-known authorities at every minute incident; and he paced up and down his room sometimes in a fever of delight at a fancied improvement, while at other times he would walk gloomily down to the end of his street, and tell himself that it would be wiser to plunge into the muddy Thames, and have done with everything, for the success of which he dreamt would never come.

The days and weeks and months that brought him nearer his goal went rapidly by in this manner. He never regretted the easy, lazy life he had left. With the exception of one brilliant figure, the world in which he had joked and flirted and idled for so long passed away from his mind, to be recalled for a second, now and

then, by a bow from a barouche, or a nod from a careless lounger; and as his interest in his studies grew deeper, his discontent cleared away, he found himself growing gayer and lighter-hearted than he had been for many months, he was ready for a laugh with "the girls" at Laurel Lodge, and could heartily enjoy the broad humour of Dawson's vulgarity. His sisters, too, began to realize that there might have been some grounds for his popularity among the women of the upper classes. Ellen and Julia were ready to own that "Philip was certainly good-looking, and could make himself agreeable if he chose;" while the youngest, Effie, looked up to her brother, in his manly determination and courage, with all the enthusiasm of her youth and high spirit.

Royle was gaining something from his change of life, if it were only the better feeling creeping up around him in his home. For even his father, bitterly as he disapproved of his son's action, was altering the tone of his grumbling, and his anger was giving way to loudly expressed pity and commiseration. He could not refuse, moreover, to enjoy his son's society; and to Effie it was a perfect study of character to watch her father's growing interest in Philip's frequent visits, to see his face brighten when Philip's voice was heard in the hall, to note his furtive smiles at Philip's bold opinions and quick retorts.

The spring and summer went by, and it was not until the autumn was nearly over that Royle's half-formed dreams

and aspirations received a sudden check. It was in early November, when, on reaching Laurel Lodge one evening, Royle found his sisters more gaily attired than was their wont; found that the work-baskets were put away, and that his father and Dawson had foregone their usual rough grey coats in favour of solemn black.

"What's the matter?" cried Royle, as he entered the room where the party had assembled. "Are you going to have a penny reading here?"

"If we have anything, it will be prayers," exclaimed Dawson. "The Rev. Augustus is coming, with his brother; so we are all trying to look sanctimonious, which will be pleasant for the brother, who is not at all clerical—quite the reverse, I am told."

"But what do they want here?" asked Royle, as he sat down at the table.

"Well, one of them wants your sister Charlotte, and the other one wants your sister Effie, I believe," replied Dawson, with uncompromising frankness.

A chorus of voices exclaimed, "William, don't be so absurd!" and in the midst of some playful recriminations from "William," the parlour-maid threw open the door, and announced—

"The Rev. Augustus Wentworth and Mr. Walter Wentworth."

"If the Rev. Augustus finds fault with our levity," whispered Dawson, hurriedly, "we must say we are Shakers!"

The Rev. Augustus did not seem disposed, however, to criticize anything. His face expanded into one broad, bland

smile, as he entered the room and introduced his brother to Mr. Royle, observing, as his excuse, that his brother had met the young ladies at a choir practice, and much wished to renew the acquaintance. Mr. Royle having graciously responded, an extensive campaign of hand-shaking was opened; at the conclusion of which, before any introduction could be attempted, a recognition took place between Walter Wentworth and Philip, to the astonishment of all present.

"So you have met already?" exclaimed the Rev. Augustus. "Why, what a curious chance, to be sure."

"Yes; we were down in Hampshire together," said young Wentworth, eyeing Royle with some curiosity. "That was

where I first met you, was it not?" he asked, turning towards Royle.

"I think it was," replied Royle.

"But I saw you very often in town afterwards," said Wentworth, pursuing his train of thought, after the party had subsided into their seats, and the Rev. Augustus was already talking apart with two of the young ladies. "You used to be always with the Clevedons, don't you remember? By Jove! what a handsome girl Miss Clevedon was!"

"Was not that the name of your tall friend in white, that we met at the opera?" asked Dawson, addressing Royle; and as Royle nodded in reply, he continued, "She certainly was the handsomest woman I have ever seen,—might have been the wife of Julius Cæsar,

or one of those autocratic kind of old Romans, who were supposed to wither people up when they frowned, and melt them when they smiled. She looked as if she had a temper of her own, too, and would throw the whole breakfast service at her husband's head, if his views of soap-boiling didn't hold with hers."

"Her husband is a calm, easy-going sort of fellow," said Wentworth. "I dare say you know him well enough, Royle."

"What, is Miss Clevedon married?" asked Royle, his face betraying nothing of the strange weight that seemed to fall suddenly upon him.

"Yes. It was all very quiet, you know," said Wentworth. "They say

it was all arranged before the admiral's death, because he left all his fortune to Jocelyn; so that directly he was dead and buried, Jocelyn and Miss Clevedon were married quietly, and went off to the continent. It's a lucky stroke of fortune for him, is it not?"

The fun was not fast and furious at the Royles' that night, but there was an evident proportion of light-heartedness. The Rev. Augustus displayed very secular leanings towards a pipe and a glass of something hot; his brother devoted himself zealously to the young ladies in general, and to Effie in particular; Dawson sang his most characteristic comic songs, accompanied on the piano by his betrothed, and occasionally insisted on the company joining in the chorus,

while the Rev. Augustus looked on in apparent delight; the ladies rendered homage to their entertainers by peals of laughter, and by exerting themselves in the conversational art of "giving as good as you send;" and Philip and his father were by no means behind-hand in promoting the comfort and amusement of the two young men. But when it was all over; when all the pretty speeches had been made; when young Wentworth had whispered to Effie that he should not rest till he met her again; when general thanks had been expressed for a most enjoyable evening; when fatherly, brotherly, sisterly, loverly, and friendly greetings had been exchanged, and the two Wentworths went away in one direction, Royle and Dawson in the

other, the evening was briefly summed up thus :—

"My dear Gus," said young Wentworth to his brother, "what terribly vulgar people! If the girl had not been so pretty, I could not have borne such an evening. To find Royle there, too, was a perfect mystery."

"I can explain all that," answered the Rev. Augustus. "The people are, of course, very vulgar; but they are also very hospitable and agreeable, and I can't afford to neglect them, for they are of great help in the parish."

"Well, old boy," said Dawson to Royle, "how have you enjoyed yourself? I flatter myself I gave those two young gentlemen a fair specimen of my accomplishments; and when they want

a rattling comic song in future, they will know where to get it. 'Sing something serious,' says July, now and then. But I have no taste for your music of groans and moans, and tears and fears. Either people have had no troubles, and don't understand what you are driving at, or they have had them, and you won't do them any good by crying over spilt milk. So what I say is, let's have a characteristic comic song of the period, and let all the company join in the chorus."

"The chorus was noisy enough to-night, at all events," said Royle. "To tell you the truth, I am somewhat tired now, and shall jump into the first cab I meet; so don't come beyond your own door, Dawson, there's a good fellow."

It was with a sense of relief that Royle found himself at last in his rooms that night, free to pace up and down in profound thought, as long as he liked. His mind was in a whirl; such a revolution had been effected in his group of ideas that he could hardly put himself into his accustomed train of thought. It seemed to him, at first, that the mainspring of his work and ambition was gone; the labour to which Silvia had encouraged him appeared vain and useless; the success on which he had counted had lost its brightest element. The shock had come suddenly upon him. He had never thought of the possibility of her marriage; he had completely appropriated her in his own mind; he had taken possession of her thoughts and

fancies, and theories and opinions; and it had seemed to him that she belonged entirely to him—that she was a guide, philosopher, and friend, to whom he might turn at any moment, and on whose sympathy and advice he might always rely. Now, however, that she was married, the illusion was wholly gone; the friendship was impossible. Jocelyn would never allow him to be intimate with his wife; besides, an indefinable something told him that such an intimacy would not be right—would not be honourable. No; he must make up his mind to the fact that the dreams he had formed respecting Silvia were all dispersed. She was married, and he did not feel quite sure that a platonic attachment would be a safe experiment,

even if her husband were disposed to allow it.

And what did it matter, after all? he said to himself again and again, as he turned restlessly backwards and forwards in his bed; if she had not married Jocelyn, she would have married some one else, and the result would always have been the same to him. He could not expect her to remain free for his sake; it was altogether preposterous, and he would not worry himself about her any longer. So he argued; but it was difficult to adhere to his resolution.

He lay wide awake for some time, his mind ever harping on the one theme, and when at last from sheer weariness he fell asleep, he was conscious, even in his dreams, of some vague disaster that

had befallen him. The next morning found him dull, listless, and dreamy; and as he sauntered into his little sitting-room, book in hand, to take his solitary breakfast, he could not help asking himself, for the thousandth time, why he should feel so depressed.

A man of genius, who is among the living celebrities of the civilized world, has declared that he awoke from his dreams and illusions suddenly one morning over his coffee, and realized in one quick moment, as he stirred the fragrant liquid, that the visions he had cherished of a paradise of pure beauty and faithful love were chimerical—that work was the only true happiness. Something of the kind happened to Royle. He never could remember exactly how it came about;

he only knew that as he sat at the table, gazing vacantly at the cup of strong tea he had poured out for himself, he realized, suddenly and irrevocably, why that strange weight had fallen upon his heart the previous evening, amidst the light gossip at Laurel Lodge.

"My God! is it because I love her?" he asked himself, as the light of truth broke in upon him; and an indefinable something, a still, small voice, answered the question he had put.

For days the idea haunted him; the novelty and the certainty of it appalled him, and the bright hopes, the radiant visions, which are usually prominent in the earlier stages of the master-passion, did not exist for him. How could he hope, since Silvia was married? What

vision could he cherish, since Silvia did not love him? For so strongly was he impressed with Silvia's truth, that he never for a moment believed that she had married Jocelyn without loving him. He went over every incident that he could remember of their acquaintance; he did his best to recall every meeting, every discussion that had taken place between them, and he was at a loss to understand why he had fallen in love with her. She had given him no encouragement, as the conventional phrase runs; she had simply talked to him in her own frank, kindly manner, had taught him the worthlessness of the life he had been leading, and had inspired him to seek independence.

He could not understand himself; he could not see why he had grown to love

her. He was convinced that he must use his mightiest efforts to stamp out and destroy this deep affection within him; and he turned with renewed ardour to his work, determined that, in some future time, she should be proud to have known him. His was a brave, strong nature, that did not waste and fritter its resources in endless repinings and self-communings. He looked the truth boldly in the face, realized that he loved with all his heart and soul a woman who was married and did not love him, resolved that he must do his utmost for his own peace of mind to forget her, and turned with unswerving determination to that best of all panaceas in such cases—work.

CHAPTER IV.

It was not till Silvia reached Waterloo Station, at about half-past two o'clock on one of the first days in October, and stood alone on the platform waiting for her luggage, amid the crowd of people, that her new life actually began. Waterloo Station never looks inviting, and on this dull grey day it seemed particularly depressing to those who came fresh from the green slopes and clear air of Hampshire. Silvia looked about her with curious eyes; the familiar landmarks of

the place wore a different appearance, because of the difference of her circumstances. Her pleasant country life was over, her rambles in the wide wild forest were pleasures of the past, her drives with her mother through the quaint and quiet villages were only memories; and as she thought of that well-loved mother lying in her grave so many miles away, her face grew very sad and serious. One or two persons turned to look at her, and seeing her alone and in deep black, muttered, "Poor girl!" and passed on. The porter who secured her luggage and put her into a cab was deferential and even gentle, judging that she was in some trouble; and his sympathy was pure speculation, for he could not have known that she would give him a shilling.

"Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square," was the address she had given the cabman, and as she was driven along the busy London streets in the noisy four-wheeler, she was speculating anxiously as to her choice of a refuge. She had plenty of fashionable acquaintances in London, but no friends of her own class to whom she could turn in such a strait. At one time she had thought of taking rooms in the house of her pretty maid Ellen, who had some time before married a journeyman baker, and was established in a London suburb, letting lodgings; but she wished to be near the central district, and preferred the Bohemian squalor of the Fitzroy quarter, to the genteel sameness of Clapham. Notwithstanding this, however, her heart sank,

for a moment, as the cab drove up to a specially dingy house in the dingy street; and she glanced at the group of dirty children about the doorstep in dismay.

One of them, catching sight of her, made a rush and a dive down the area steps, screaming, "Mother, mother, here's Miss Clevedon!" The result of which energetic action was that before the cabman had contrived to knock at the door, Mrs. Johnson, the ex-lodgekeeper's wife, had thrown it open, exclaiming—

"Why, I am surprised, miss! Whatever can be the matter?"

"The matter is that I want a lodging somewhere, Mrs. Johnson," said Silvia. "Have you any rooms to let? Can the cabman bring my trunks in here?"

"Yes, there are plenty of rooms, miss," Mrs. Johnson answered, with something like bitterness on her gentle face. "No fear of that."

She stood at the door in blank amazement, and while the great trunks were placed in the hall, she tried to wave away the groups of grimy children who had collected about the steps; and when the cabman was paid, and she had led Silvia into the front parlour, she exclaimed—

"Well, it does me good to see your face again, somehow or another, miss, though I'm very sorry that it's trouble that has brought you here. Have you lost anybody, miss?" she asked, glancing at Silvia's black clothes with sympathy.

"I have lost everybody," Silvia an-

swered, gazing blankly out of the window. "My mother and my father are dead, and Mr. Jocelyn does not know where I am. I have very little money left, and have no friends who would care for me without my money, so I am come to live by myself, and to work for myself. I came to you, Mrs. Johnson, because I wished you to have the benefit of the money I spent, and I thought the rent I should pay would be a positive help to you."

"Thank you, miss; you were always so kind and thoughtful for us," muttered Mrs. Johnson, who had not yet recovered from her surprise. "It certainly will be a help, for we have not been very flourishing. Johnson's working just now, it's true, but he was for a long time quite

empty-handed. Then, these rooms don't seem to let well. I can't say how it is, but it do seem as if there was such a thing as luck. There's Mrs. Green next door has got her house full, while I've never let my drawing-rooms but once, and for the last two or three months have only had my second-floor back lodger, who is a nice gentleman enough, but doesn't bring in much. I shall be very glad indeed to have you, though, miss, and will try to do my best for you in every way."

After some discussion of ways and means, it was decided that Silvia should occupy the front and back parlours, for the consideration of one pound sterling the week, and that Mrs. Johnson should buy her provisions for her, and cook them,

and give her a weekly bill, in which due charge would be made for attendance and the trouble of buying and cooking. These points being settled, Mrs. Johnson judged it necessary to return to her baby in the kitchen, and Silvia was left alone.

She could hardly realize the vast change that had taken place in her life; and as she looked round the parlour which was thenceforth to be her home, it seemed to her still as if she were in a dream, and would wake presently to find herself back in her luxurious room at Clevedon House. She noted every detail of furniture unconsciously and involuntarily; she wondered where Mrs. Johnson had discovered the china vases that decked the mantelpiece; she speculated as to the cost of the straight-backed

chairs and sofa; she followed every twist and turn of the bright pattern on the tablecloth, the thoughts passing through her mind in a lazy, aimless sort of way. Then she turned to the window, and for a few moments looked into the dreary street, at the black houses opposite, standing in bold relief against the grey sky. Not a ray of the sunlight that had shone over hill and dale and field and forest in Hampshire only that very morning, had enlivened the metropolis; and as Silvia bent her head to look down the street, the cheerful prospect of the New Road in the distance was veiled by an obliging mist rising in Fitzroy Square.

From the front room she went to the bedroom at the back, which was separated from the sitting-room by folding

doors; and after a lengthy contemplation of the backs of houses, of strips of yard, of water-butts and clothes-lines and broken flower-pots, she returned to her parlour, and commenced her career of self-help by taking a match from the mantelpiece and applying it to the fire, which was already laid. The wood burnt quickly, the coal crackled and flamed cheerily; and as Silvia, having taken off her hat and jacket, sat down in one of the stiff armchairs within the warm glow, she said to herself—

"At all events, a fire does not burn one way for the rich and another way for the poor!"

She sat a long time that afternoon in the firelight, pondering over her strange position; thinking over the easy grooves

in which her life would have run had she consented to marry Jocelyn; thinking of the pleasant and unpleasant acquaintances from whom she had thoroughly separated herself; thinking of the struggle before her.

It was somewhat late in the afternoon when Mrs. Johnson appeared again, ostensibly for the purpose of seeing if Miss Clevedon wanted anything; but with an evident feminine leaning towards a conversation that would satisfy her curiosity.

"I hope you don't feel too lonesome, miss," the good woman said, when Silvia's meal of tea and a chop had been decided upon. "I've been thinking of you so often while I have been busy downstairs, but I didn't like to come up

and disturb you; and, besides, I was obliged to do my cleaning before Johnson comes home. Won't you come down, miss, and see how comfortable it all is, and how baby has got on?"

"Certainly, I will," replied Silvia; and Mrs. Johnson led the way to the kitchen, hastening to light the gas, that it might be seen in all its splendour.

The three children had gathered round the fire—the two younger ones in the charge of the elder, who, being more than nine years of age, was considered a veteran—and were casting longing glances at the bread and butter, which with tea-cups, and milk-jug, and sugar-basin, were spread out at one end of the table. The place looked fairly clean and comfortable—very different, indeed,

to the bright neatness of the lodge at Lyndwood, where she had last seen them—but still fairly clean and comfortable. The children, however, were paler than they had been in the fresh New Forest air, and the elder one, Annie, had a worn look on her little face that does not come, as a rule, of country life. She it was who remembered Silvia, and who had been the first to fly to her mother and prepare her. Mrs. Johnson did not seem to perceive the difference that Silvia saw in their appearance, and she said cheerfully—

"They have got on nicely, all of them, haven't they, miss? Baby was crawling about when you last saw him, and now he's as firm on his feet as he can be. Lizzie's a good girl enough too; and as

for Annie, I don't know what we should do without her. She tided over many a difficulty for us, when Johnson was out of work."

"What, little Annie there?" exclaimed Silvia.

"Yes, miss, that she did. She went to a lady's house every afternoon to hold the baby, and was paid two shillings a week, and in the mornings she stopped at home and looked after the house, while I went out scrubbing, or washing, or sewing, or what not."

"Poor little Annie!" murmured Silvia, stroking the child's face with her hand, and smiling kindly into the wondering young eyes.

At that moment, a heavy tread was heard on the area steps, and in a second

the outer door was flung open, and Johnson entered, his clothes bearing ample testimony that he was following the stonemason's calling. The man looked savage and sullen; his face was thin and haggard, and he did not seem either so broad or so stalwart as when he was leading an easy and comparatively free life at Lyndwood. He turned sharply towards his wife, as he saw the tall, black-robed figure standing beside Annie, as if to ask her what the intrusion meant.

"Good evening, Johnson," said Silvia; and, as she spoke, she could not but see that he remembered her, and that his face grew more and more sullen in expression. "I have come to live in your house for a time, and have made all my arrangements with your wife, as she will

tell you. And you find me down here, because I had come to have a look at the children."

There was an unmistakable scowl on Johnson's countenance, as he listened to Silvia's few words; and when she had finished, he muttered something which was quite unintelligible to her, and, with a final sentence terminating with some allusion to cleaning himself, went off into the back kitchen.

"Johnson is a little vexed at everything just now, miss," said his wife, in a low, apologetic voice. "You see, he has been turned wrong by the difficulties he has had in his road ever since we left Lyndwood, and he can't forget it."

"At any rate, I will go up to my rooms," said Silvia, gravely; "and this

evening you can come to me and tell me all your troubles, and I can tell you some of mine;" and she went back to the contemplation of her parlour fire.

In a few moments Johnson reappeared in the kitchen, considerably cleaner, but not less sulky in aspect. He sat down at the fireside, and stretching himself in order to put his hands firmly in his pockets, said briefly, looking at his wife, "What does she want?"

"Do you mean Miss Clevedon?" asked Mrs. Johnson.

He nodded in reply, and she continued—

"Why, she wants rooms here. She seems in great trouble. The master—I mean the admiral—and Mrs. Clevedon are both dead, and I don't know, I'm sure,

what's become of all the money; but Miss Clevedon hasn't got any——"

"No more have we!" remarked Johnson.

"Leastways, none to speak of, to compare with what she had," Mrs. Johnson proceeded, without noticing her lord's observation nor those that followed; "and she says she has got to work for herself, and as she wanted lodgings in London, she thought it might be a bit of help to us if she came here. She didn't say what work she was going to do."

"None at all, it's my belief," growled Johnson.

"But it's very hard for a young lady, who has lived, you may say, on the fat of the land all her life," continued Mrs. Johnson, "to find herself so reduced as to have to work for her bread."

"Not half so hard as for people, who have worked ever since they were babies, to have to go on slaving to the end of their days, and all the time getting more kicks than halfpence!" interrupted Johnson again.

"You must own that it was very kind of her to think of helping us with our rent," said Mrs. Johnson; "and I am sure, when I think of her sitting up there alone in her black gown, poor dear—her as I've seen so rich and grand, and so handsome, with always such a pleasant smile for me and the children—it makes me feel quite miserable, that it does." And here Mrs. Johnson lifted her apron to her face, and wiped away a few tears.

"Come now, I say, stop that," cried Johnson, angrily. "If you want to cry,

you had better cry over your own troubles. I'm sure we've got plenty, without going and mixing ourselves up in other people's stories. I hate the sound of the name of Clevedon, there!—do you hear?—and—I want my tea."

With a heavy thump on the table, he accentuated his allusion to the Clevedons; and after that his wife said no more, but busied herself about the domestic arrangements.

It was late that evening, when the various meals were over, and the two younger children were safely stowed away in their bed in the back kitchen, that Mrs. Johnson told all her troubles to Silvia—how, after the dismissal from the admiral's service, her husband had been unable to get another similar place,

the fact of his having left Clevedon House lodge at a week's notice on the charge of drunkenness being an insuperable bar to re-engagement; how he had returned to his old trade, to which he had served his apprenticeship, and which he had followed until the time of his marriage; how he got on badly at the work, being "stiff" at it, and being treated with good-humoured derision by his mates; how he had borrowed money of her people to pay the first half-year's rent of the house, and had scrambled bits of furniture together, she hardly knew how, that they might let out the rooms as furnished apartments; how the scheme had not been successful as yet; and how Johnson was very bitter indeed against the admiral, attributing all his disasters

and disappointments, directly or indirectly, to that summary dismissal.

"But he's a kind-hearted man, for all that, miss," said Mrs. Johnson; "and I'm sure, when he hears all that you've been through, he will be as sorry as a man can be for you."

Silvia went to bed that night thoroughly worn out; she was physically tired, and mentally she was exhausted. The variety of scenes through which she had passed had completely unnerved her, and many bitter tears fell upon her pillow before she went to sleep. But in spite of her grief, her depression, and her rapid descent in life from luxury to bare necessity, she was not troubled with one moment's regret at her decision respecting Jocelyn.

CHAPTER V.

Silvia entered immediately upon her search for employment of some kind, and found many difficulties and disappointments in her way. Her mind was not firmly fixed as to the style of work she could undertake; she hardly knew for what she was fitted. She would have undoubtedly made a strong-minded and original governess, but that form of bread-winning was eminently distasteful to her. She had a dim consciousness that few matrons would care to engage so independent a person, as Silvia unmistakably

was, to teach their children; and she was convinced that she could never control herself sufficiently to be able to support the slights that were likely to be put upon her. No; she was by no means fitted to be a governess. She said to herself that she would far sooner do plain needlework, at the rate of two shillings a day, than take up her residence in the conventional English family as tutor to the young idea. She might go out as a morning governess, it was true, without incurring any of the loss of dignity and independence that she dreaded; still, in any case, the work would have been peculiarly unsuited to her, and she put the thought aside, determined to try her chance in that line only if everything else failed her.

Her position was a difficult one, and was one, moreover, in which many girls find themselves in these days, when wealth is gaining so great an ascendancy in the public mind—when men dare not marry until they can afford to keep a large house, to have the wife clothed by Worth, to give *dîners à la Russe* with printed *menus*, on the most unceremonious occasions, in order to retain the respect of society. The rich business men of England live amply and well, and undoubtedly spend solid sums of money in providing for their large households; and it often happens that, when they die, the money they leave behind is quite inadequate to the requirements of the mourning widow and children. There are no husbands forth-

coming to carry off the girls; all the young men of their own class have been frightened from any matrimonial intent by their luxurious surroundings and apparent unfittedness for any of the hardships that accompany a slender income, and presently the daughters find themselves compelled by circumstances to make an attempt at earning their bread. They are agreeable, good-hearted girls, of pleasing appearance and unaffected—perhaps somewhat free-and-easy—manners. They have a smattering of accomplishments: they can read Octave Feuillet's "Roman d'un Jeune Homme pauvre," in the original, and, with the help of a dictionary, can understand what they read; they can play the piano in a harmless, unobtrusive

manner; they have begun the German grammar, and have been unable to flounder as far as the verbs; they can sing an ordinary English ballad fairly, if some one accompany them and allow them to strike a note here and there in order to keep in tune; they are adepts at croquet and are fairly skilled at lawn-tennis; they know nothing of housekeeping—they could not make a tart if their lives depended upon such a feat; and they are hardly able to do more with their needles than make æsthetic abominations for bazaars and fancy fairs, for their parents have not encouraged them in the useful arts, which are so often associated with lack of "gentility."

This is the mental condition of many

of the young ladies who go out into the world as governesses; they start upon their career of self-help boldly and bravely enough, and the zeal with which they do that which they are able to do, glorifies the work. But the system is none the less blameworthy. To instruct the young is one of the noblest, as well as one of the most responsible of missions, and it is of primary importance that the early lessons should be authoritative and judicious, for these often remain when later and wiser teaching has entirely faded.

How many English girls have echoed Silvia's continual cry, "If I had only been taught to do one thing well! If I had only been taught a profession, like a man!" There are now such numbers

of women working steadily day by day for their living—women belonging to ranks of life wherein, from time immemorial, idleness has been considered an essentially feminine virtue—that no parents, in educating their daughters, should forget to meet eventualities by giving them a thorough and complete course of instruction in one branch at least, so that a girl may feel confident of herself on one score; so that she may be able to say, "If I cannot play the piano, I am, at all events, a perfect French scholar," or *vice versâ*. Not only would the hardships and difficulties of the possible future be considerably lessened, but the girls themselves would be far happier at home. Browning says—

"Few families were racked
By torture self-supplied, did Nature grant but this,
That women comprehend mental analysis."

He might have added that few families were troubled with petty squabblings and jealousies, ill-conditioned flirtations and frivolities, did society but allow women to work, with all the intellectual vigour at their command, in some one given line. As things are, there is no encouragement afforded to girls who show a disposition to something more ennobling than the continual babble of matrimony and costume, which is the staple amusement of the feminine youth of England. Here and there we find a girl who, possessed of real artistic taste, has coaxed a reluctant consent from her father, and is pursuing a course of fairly

serious study at one of the art schools; or a more strong-minded daughter who has joined scientific classes, and given up her whole soul to chemistry, or medicine, or political economy; but, as a rule, the girlhood of England can do nothing much more sound and solid than to flirt with men and criticize women. The few independent spirits that spring up in the *melée* are laughed at and sneered at by their less-gifted sisters, and are avoided by the young men of their acquaintance. Matrons point at them as persons who wish to unsex themselves. Fathers of families declare that, in their young days, women had no absurd ideas about independence, and helping themselves, and employing their minds and their time, but were

content to hem their children's pinafores, and study the making of puddings for the benefit of their lords; and that their sisters, before they were married, never ventured to speak until they were "spoken to," much less to declare that they wanted to be taught a profession like their brothers. Yet some of these women, who are said to be unsexed by work, remain to the end as modest, as unaffected, as refined and womanly, as the most enthusiastic admirer of womanhood can wish.

These words will call to many minds the remembrance of a career of hard mental work performed by a woman living in our midst, who has profound learning at the back of her modestly expressed opinions; who can discuss

a tenet of John Stuart Mill's with logical acuteness, and yet enjoys a waltz and a galop as heartily as women of "lighter thought;" who is thoroughly at home in the chemist's laboratory, and is welcomed with a cheer and a rush of small feet towards her when she enters the nursery; who has a knowledge of law that many of the nobler sex might envy, and can be interested in her friend's new bonnet; who can frame the resolutions at a meeting, and preside at her tea-table with infinite grace and thoughtfulness; who is, in short, popular among all people in all classes, because to the so-called manly characteristics of independence, industry, mental vigour, and ambition which she possesses, she adds the sympathetic heart, the tact and

modesty and refinement, which are essential qualities in true womanhood.

Silvia was, as we have seen, a person of special gifts; yet, when it became necessary to her to earn her own living, she was puzzled where to turn. She had, of course, followed the usual course of instruction in her childhood; but she had rapidly broken loose from its conventionalities, had positively refused to learn drawing, having no artistic taste or aptitude, and had never taken very kindly to her music-lessons. She loved music, but in a strange, informal manner. She used to sit at the piano in the twilight at Clevedon House, and let her fingers ramble over the keys, breaking into the most disconnected musical phrases, and improvising harmonies that would have

appalled her professor; and she had frequently borrowed the keys of the pretty church on the crest of the hill from the Lyndwood organist, in order to enjoy an hour or two's meditative performance on the church organ.

Side by side with this peculiar development of musical taste was Silvia's passion for reading, a passion which had possessed her from the time when she was able to read. At twelve years of age she had mastered some of the dreariest works in her father's library, had dipped into every branch of literature, and had been found one afternoon curled up on the hearthrug by the fire, reading Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy!" The persons who knew of Silvia's habit strongly deprecated it; but the admiral

himself, though he grumbled very often, never positively forbade Silvia's headlong course among the treasures of his library. Indeed, it would have been useless to attempt to prevent her reading; and, as the family doctor had pointed out when she was still a child, if she were forbidden the sound high-class literature on her father's shelves, she would inevitably find elsewhere reading of an inferior style, that might warp her natural good taste and refined leanings. So she read to her heart's content, and no one had discovered that it had done her any harm. Her father had declared sometimes that her strange views of the world came from books; but her views were rather the natural outcome of youth, and an ardent, impulsive, generous nature. All this was

not palpably useful to her, however, in her search for employment; and as she studied the columns of advertisements in the papers, and looked through the list of persons wanted hung up at the doors of agencies, she saw nothing that applied at all to her. Day after day she wandered about the melancholy Bloomsbury streets; time after time she penetrated to the squalid vivacity of Soho, and scanned the advertisements of public requirements in the various offices where foreigners applied for work; but she found nothing. Governesses were wanted by scores, it appeared; but no one was in haste to secure a person who, in spite of her intelligence and great gifts, did not know for what she was suited.

Finally, one day, about a month after

her arrival in London, Silvia felt specially discouraged, she hardly knew why. She had had no special hope of success, therefore no special disappointment, with regard to the results of her anxious plodding through the advertisements of the *Telegraph;* she had not expected to see a card inscribed *Wanted*, on which all her peculiar characteristics were set forth, in a local shop-window; she had anticipated nothing, and therefore, she told herself again and again, she was foolish to be more than usually downcast.

With some idea in her mind of walking off her depression, Silvia turned with brisk steps down Long Acre, arguing and reasoning with herself, as she went along unnoticed and unnoticing, her face hidden

by her crape veil. She walked across Trafalgar Square, down Parliament Street, and she did not pause to consider her destination until she reached the broad space in front of Westminster Abbey. She looked about her carelessly enough, at the massive clock-tower, the magnificence of the Houses of Parliament, at the grand solemnity of the Abbey; and then she turned swiftly towards the nearest entrance, and in a few seconds stood within the walls that shelter the remains of so many great Englishmen.

The holy calm and quiet of the place fell with strange contrast upon the busy turmoil of her thoughts. There was not a sound to be heard, and to many persons the very stillness, the dim, religious light, the monuments on every side of the great

and good and wise of all ages, would have had a ghostly effect. But to Silvia the very air was redolent of peace and rest, and as she sank into a seat close by the door at which she had entered, it seemed as if she had reached a haven at last. She sat still a long time, enjoying the unwonted repose, her thoughts wandering here and there, planning and remembering, hoping and despairing, when suddenly her eye caught a glitter as of gold on the massive stone, a foot or two from her. She bent her head to catch a better glimpse, and saw that the glitter came from the gold letters newly engraved on the stone close by, and she also noticed that the stone appeared to have been more recently taken up than those which surrounded it. She left her seat,

and stooped to look at the letters, which spelt the magic name of *Charles Dickens.*

A glow suffused her face, and her eyes filled with tears, as she realized that the man whose genius had been her delight, over whose creations she had cried and laughed and pondered from her childhood upwards, to whom she owed so many happy hours, so many profound ideas of justice and humanity, was lying underneath the stone at her feet. She stood looking at the shining letters as if they had a fascination for her, and she thought, as she looked, of the dreary boyhood, the joyless youth, the barren bitter path to manhood, which were Dickens's earliest experiences, and of the reward which had come to him in later years; of the proud pre-eminence of popularity he

had attained; of the undying effect of his noble defence of the poor and downcast and oppressed throughout the land. These thoughts cheered her, she hardly knew why. It seemed to her that perhaps, in her own small way, some success might come in the end to her, as a reward for the courage and patience and perseverance she might show. And after all, she argued, Dickens was anxious to do good, and did do good; why should not she, in her smaller and humbler way, be able to achieve something of that at which she aimed?

She could hardly have explained how it was, but it was undoubtedly true that the contemplation of the stone above *Charles Dickens*, in Westminster Abbey, roused up all her energy and determination; the

remembrance of his obscure and humble beginning, and the final glory of his resting-place, revived her courage. "He knew the poor, he pleaded for the poor, he helped the poor, and he is buried at Westminster," she muttered to herself, as she turned away at last to leave; "and if I can help some one, or do something that will help some one, it does not much matter if my body is thrown into the Thames when I am dead!"

The afternoon was far advanced when she found herself once more in the open air; indeed, such a mist was hanging about the river and the clock-tower and the houses, that Silvia quickened her steps, fearing lest a fog should come on and impede her walk home. She had hardly got into Parliament Street, when

she heard a rush of pattering steps behind her, and a dog—she could not see what it was like—sprang up at her, bounding with delight, yelping and barking, and licking her gloved hands. She stopped in dismay, for a moment; then, on looking intently at the animal, she thought she recognized, in spite of the dusk, the curly black coat and the fine head and eloquent eyes of her old favourite.

"Why, Tartar, my good fellow," she said, as she patted his head, "how did you get up here?"

The dog indulged in more boisterous expressions of delight when he heard her voice, and rubbed his head against her hand, and bounded up before her again and again, for more pattings and strokings from his mistress's fingers.

Silvia was inexpressibly startled at this sudden meeting with her favourite, who had been her companion in so many jaunts and expeditions through the forest land around her old home; and it seemed to her as if she had found a veritable friend. She did not know what was to be done with him—where he was to be kept; but she was determined that he should not leave her. Indeed, the faithful creature seemed to have made up his canine mind to the fact that his mistress, once found, was not to be lost sight of again; and he kept an excessively close watch on Silvia, turning his head up to her every now and then, as he ran along by her side.

Great was the astonishment expressed by Mrs. Johnson when Silvia reached her dreary home in Charlotte Street.

"However did he get up to London, miss?" she asked, as she stood staring at Tartar.

"I don't know," replied Silvia, stroking the dog's head gently; "and he can't tell us—can you, poor Tartar? He has not been spoiled, however, by too much food or care. See, how thin he is, and how ragged and dusty his coat looks. It's a mere chance that I came across him. It would not have happened had I not lingered a long time in Westminster Abbey."

And then suddenly Silvia remembered all her thoughts and dreams, her newborn energy and revived hopes, beside the great man's grave, and it seemed to her like a good omen that she should have found if it were only a dog to love

her and protect her, immediately after the burst of fresh courage within her.

"He can sleep in the wash-house," Mrs. Johnson said, breaking in somewhat roughly upon Silvia's thoughts. "Johnson can make him up a bed of straw and that, and then he will be company for you, miss, in the day time, and can go with you on your walks; which, I often say to Johnson, it isn't right for a young lady like you to walk about alone like you do. What puzzles me, though, is how Tartar can have come to London."

Mrs. Johnson had to restrain her curiosity, however, for Tartar himself could not tell the story of his journey, and it was never discovered; but Silvia shrewdly suspected that the dog had pined for her, and that he had been sent

up to town as a recreation, and to get over his sorrow.

In any case, she was delighted to have him with her; and as he lay on the hearthrug beside her on the dreary winter evenings when search for employment was impossible, she felt that she had a faithful friend.

CHAPTER VI.

One evening, close upon Christmas-tide, Johnson came home to his wife and children with a specially grave look upon his face. Mrs. Johnson noticed it, but did not venture to make a remark, and little Annie's worldly wisdom had taught her the value of silence; but the younger child, after a moment's contemplation of her father, as he sat by the fire waiting for his tea, asked, frankly—

"Are you cross, father?"

Johnson did not answer. But his expression was evidently not very forbidding,

to the child's mind, for she clambered on to a chair beside him, and began to play tricks with his coat and his pockets; and after a time the matter on which Johnson had been pondering was revealed, to his wife's great satisfaction. He had secured his second cup of tea, when he asked suddenly, jerking his head towards the parlour—

"I suppose she hasn't succeeded no better to-day than most other days, has she?"

"She didn't say nothing to me, one way or the other, when she come in," replied Mrs. Johnson, "and I've given up asking her, poor dear! for it was only a trial to her to keep on saying 'No,' day after day. Have you heard of anything that might suit?"

"Well, I can't say as I haven't, and I can't say as I have," said Johnson, slowly, stirring his tea as he spoke. "I've heard of some one who might perhaps hear of something one day, and I've been thinking whether it was right of me to hold out my little finger for the good of *his* daughter."

"How you do go on, to be sure!" rejoined Mrs. Johnson. "I should think you might have forgotten all that by this time."

"Forgotten what?" exclaimed Johnson, an angry light coming to his eyes. "Did you think I had forgotten that the master I served faithfully for ten years turned me away like a dog because of one little slip? There's not a day that I don't remember it; and I tell

you what it is—when I see how our home's been broken up, how you have to slave and toil to keep the place decent, I feel that I hate him worse and worse; and when I see how worried you look, and how pale and thin the young uns are, I could curse him, that I could!"

"Hush, Johnson, do!" his wife begged. "If you talk so loud, Miss Clevedon will hear you; and it would seem terribly unkind to her, when she's in trouble, and when she's so kind to us, and so thoughtful to the children."

"Then you shouldn't ask such foolish questions as whether I had forgotten all about the admiral. As if I shouldn't remember it all to my dying day!" Johnson grunted; and his wife was wise

enough not to remind him that she had asked no question.

Presently she boldly attacked him.

"But you never told me what it was you heard of, Johnson. You can't be really thinking of keeping it back, can you?"

"Well, that's just what I was a-saying to myself," said Johnson. "After all, she's been kind enough to us all, as far as that goes, and she never had none of *his* high-handed ways."

"Don't you remember how she rode off to Squire Morcambe's that day, so quick?" insinuated Mrs. Johnson.

"Yes, I remember," muttered Johnson; "and the squire turned round and denied what he had said before, because he was asked, showing what his word was

worth. But, as I was saying, Miss Clevedon's done her best for us, and it don't seem fair not to do one's best for her, much as it may go against the grain."

He paused for some moments; then said, in a grudging, grumbling voice, "Well, the fact is that one of my mates was talking about his wife, who's a bookbinder, or something like that, and is out all day at work, as they haven't any young uns, and he mentioned a chap who was at the head of some society, and who was always busying himself about getting work for women, or was very interested in 'em. So then I thought he might perhaps be able to help her"—and he jerked his head again towards the parlour above—"specially when he sees her good looks. I don't know the chap's

name, but I can find it out from my mate, and you had better ask her if she cares about knowing it. I am sure I don't know why I should busy myself about it at all; I ought to have enough to do to look after myself and my family, without troubling myself about the concerns of any one named Clevedon; but it seems downright unkind not to say anything about this society chap."

Mrs. Johnson was profoundly disappointed. She had hoped that her husband had found a post all ready, "cut and dry," for Miss Clevedon, and this mere possibility or probability seemed as nothing to her. She did not answer Johnson, and her face fell considerably; and presently, when she went upstairs to the parlour with Silvia's tea and toast on

a tray, she did not, by any means, look like a bearer of joyful tidings. However, after a few moments' conversation with Silvia, she came back to the kitchen radiant.

"Now, then, what's the matter?" growled Johnson, who, having allowed a kindness to escape him, felt bound to be more than usually rough and surly, if it were only as a matter of keeping up his character. "I don't know what's happened, but it's nothing so pleasant, I'm sure, that you need come into the place grinning like that. What does she say? Has she promised you a hundred-weight of coals, or is she going to stand four ale all round?"

"She said I was to thank you for thinking of her," Mrs. Johnson said; "and she

should be very glad indeed to know the gentleman's name. So don't forget to ask to-morrow, will you, Johnson."

"I can't say, I'm sure, whether I shall forget, or whether I shan't," replied Johnson. "It's none of my fault if things escape me, and it's no use my saying what I shall do, one way or the other."

And, with this enigmatic and vague statement of faith in himself, Johnson relapsed into silence, and Mrs. Johnson was obliged to content herself as best she could.

The next evening, when Johnson returned from his work, he showed a disposition to temporize and evade, much as he had done the night before; and, finally, Mrs. Johnson begged him to go

upstairs to Miss Clevedon himself, and tell her whatever he'd got to say. He went, much to her astonishment; and as she heard his heavy boots on the kitchen stairs, she said to Annie—

"Your father is the very essence of contrariness. I'm sure, to hear him talk last night, you'd have thought he couldn't have contained himself in the same room with Miss Clevedon, and now to-day he walks up to speak to her as quiet as a lamb. Talk of babies being contrary,—they're not half so contrary as men!"

In the mean time, Johnson, having knocked at the parlour door, opened it in response to Silvia's "Come in," and for a moment or two felt rather awkward as he confronted the lady to whom he was about to indicate a possible employer.

Silvia was sitting at the table, a solid volume before her, the lamp beside her, and Tartar at her feet. The light shone upon her face, and it seemed, even to Johnson's unskilled eyes, that she had altered somewhat since he had caught that glimpse of her on the evening of her arrival. Her cheeks had lost all their country glow, and there was a great look of fatigue about her eyes.

She smiled pleasantly enough when she saw Johnson standing in the doorway, and his heart smote him, as he saw that smile, for all the hard and bitter things he had said about her.

"Good evening, Mr. Johnson," she said. "Won't you come in?"

"The fact is, miss," said Johnson, breaking boldly into his subject, and

walking resolutely up to the table, "the missus tells me that you haven't been quite so lucky as you thought for, and—and—I hope you'll excuse me, but that was why I thought of the chap my mate spoke of, that he might, perhaps, be able to do something to help you."

"There is nothing to be excused," said Silvia. "On the contrary, I am much obliged to you for the thought. Did your friend know the name of this gentleman who is interested in women's work?"

"Yes; he wrote down the name for me, and where he lived," said Johnson, placing a soiled and crumpled piece of paper before Silvia, on which was written—

Andrew Graeme,
38, *Chancery Lane.*

"And he says," continued Johnson, "that the gentleman is mixed up in all sorts of plans for helping women that wants to be independent. That was his words. And I should like to tell you, miss, if you will allow me, that if I have said a hard word at times, and haven't always expressed myself as kindly as I might, it's because it makes me feel downright savage, sometimes, to see the young uns and the missus pining for their natural country air."

"I know that it was hard for you," said Silvia, gravely; "at the same time, it was not kind of you to bear any resentment to me."

"And I don't, in my heart," interrupted Johnson; "but I am a bit hasty, and then says more than I means."

"Yes; I think you are a 'bit hasty,'" said Silvia, her face softening into one of her bright smiles. "But, at any rate, I thank you heartily for your help, and shall not forget it, you can be sure."

Johnson returned to his wife and children perfectly melted. He would hardly say a word as to his conversation with Miss Clevedon, in spite of his wife's curiosity and questions. Recently Mrs. Johnson, in the course of a running commentary on affairs in general, said, "I'm sure it would be a very good thing if she was to get something regular, so that I might tell where she goes of a day, when folks says she isn't no better than she should be."

"Who says so?" Johnson thundered.

"Do hush now, Johnson," said his

wife. "Why, it was Mrs. Green next door said so to me the other day, and Mrs. Larkom opposite told Annie she was astonished at my taking in such lodgers."

"Well, the next time they give you any of their impudence, any of them," cried Johnson, "you tell 'em to come and tell me, and I'll soon settle 'em if they say anything insulting about her;" and, with his usual jerk of the head towards the parlour, Johnson subsided into silence.

"Dear, dear!" muttered Mrs. Johnson, who had been lost in astonishment at her husband's violent change of tone and sentiment, "there never was any one half so contrary as Johnson!"

CHAPTER VII.

After much deliberation, Silvia resolved to apply to Mr. Graeme in person. Her first impulse was to write to him; for she dreaded the idea of confronting him, and boldly asking him—a perfect stranger—to exert himself, no matter how slightly, on her behalf. But she was conscious that a letter would not be by any means so effectual, and he was likely to toss it aside into his paper-basket unread, while she would be enduring measureless suspense. So she decided to venture to Chancery Lane herself.

"After all, it is far better that I should see him," she tried to persuade herself, as she went on her way to Mr. Graeme's office. "We shall understand each other better; he may be able to judge of my capabilities, and I shall have a clue to his character and nature."

But she did not feel very confident, and it was with some apprehension that when she reached No. 38, Chancery Lane, and found from the door-plates that Mr. Graeme was on the second floor, she went upstairs and rang the bell.

A young man of somewhat jaunty aspect opened the door, which led into a back-room, where some young men were busy at desks.

"Can I see Mr. Graeme?" asked Silvia.

"Have you an appointment, madam?" inquired the young man.

"No, I have no appointment," said Silvia, in a low voice; "but if he could let me see him now, I will not detain him long."

The clerk disappeared into an inner room, and after a moment or two came back, and throwing open the door, said, "Will you walk in, madam?"

With a murmured "Thank you," Silvia passed into the presence of Mr. Andrew Graeme.

He had risen as she entered, and stood, stiff and uncompromising in appearance, by the fireplace. The first glance Silvia caught of him so disheartened her, that she did not dare look again for a long time. As for the room, she noticed

nothing at first; but she remembered afterwards the walls lined with solidly filled book-shelves, the long low table with its countless drawers, the wide desk, the lamps with their green shades, the roomy round-backed armchairs, the letter-racks, envelope-cases, paper-baskets, pen-trays, etc., that stood about in different corners. But she observed nothing of all this at the time, and, after that glimpse of Mr. Graeme, was wondering how soon she could get away.

"You wished to speak to me, madam," said Mr. Graeme, scanning her face attentively. "May I ask you if you wish to consult me professionally, as a solicitor?"

"I am afraid," murmured Silvia, "that I ought not to have intruded upon you

here, for I certainly do not come to consult you as a solicitor, but——" Here her voice failed her, and she was a second or two struggling to regain her usual composure.

Mr. Graeme waited for a time, contemplating his visitor with something like curiosity in his grave, impassive face. At length he said, "Are you not able to tell me why you have come here?"

Silvia raised her eyes to him quickly; he did not look as if he meant anything specially disagreeable and he certainly did not look as if he meant anything agreeable. At all events, she took courage from his aspect, and answered, without hesitation, "I have been told that you were greatly interested in helping women to work for

themselves, and I was led to believe that you might perhaps be able to show me some calling I might follow. I might have written to you, it is true, but I feared you would throw my letter aside unread."

"Nothing so unbusiness-like is ever done in a solicitor's office," said Mr. Graeme, shortly.

"And I preferred risking your displeasure to bearing the suspense."

Mr. Graeme turned sharply to look at Silvia once again, and then said, more graciously, "I am glad to see that you are frank. Pray be seated;" and he pushed one of the round-backed chairs towards her. "What work do you think of doing? what employment are you seeking?" said Mr. Graeme, still standing before the

fireplace, and swinging himself gently backwards and forwards.

"Indeed, I hardly know," murmured poor Silvia. "I would rather not go out as a governess. I am certain that I am not fitted for the work; it is difficult to teach well, and I should not be satisfied if that which I had to do were *not* done well."

"Governess work is hopeless, I should say," remarked Mr. Graeme, decisively. "You're too good-looking. There would be all sorts of difficulties—jealous daughters, susceptible sons, discerning friends, and so on. Governess work won't do. What else do you suggest?"

"It was exactly because I had nothing else to suggest that I came to you," answered Silvia; "but I am very sorry

that I troubled you at all, for I don't think you will be able to do anything for me."

"The fact is that you rather mistake my position, I think," said Mr. Graeme. "I am not a large employer of labour, and have no ladies at all in my service, and all that I can do for you is to put your name down on the books of the society to which I belong, and to recommend you on all sides. Then, what am I to say you can do? Could you keep accounts, take notes, and write letters, do you think?"

Silvia's face brightened. "Yes, I have no doubt I could, and I could always learn," she replied eagerly.

He took a note-book from his pocket and asked what name he should inscribe;

and while he was writing the words "Silvia Clevedon," he said, "I trust you are not in any way deceiving or disobeying your father in seeking work?"

"My father is dead," said Silvia, abruptly.

"But does your mother, at all events, know of your scheme?" urged Mr. Graeme.

"My mother is dead also," said Silvia, in a low, altered voice.

"Oh, really. I beg your pardon; pray forgive me," muttered Mr. Graeme, glancing hastily at Silvia's black dress. "What address shall I write down?"

Silvia told him her street and her number, and then rose. She was about to thank him and leave, when an idea struck her.

"There is one thing I ought to tell you," she said; "that is, if any one were kind enough to think of employing me, I could give no references. The only persons who can bear witness to my identity are my landlady and her husband, who were my father's lodge-keepers."

"Have you no friends to whom any inquiries needed might be addressed," asked Mr. Graeme, "or did you lose them all when you lost your fortune?"

"I did not lose my fortune," said Silvia, proudly. "I gave it up because it was saddled with a husband I did not want."

Mr. Graeme looked at her fixedly, and said, "So you threw up the money because of the man? Well, that was

very unbusiness-like of you—very—and from a professional point of view I cannot approve it; still, it will give me pleasure to shake hands with you, Miss Clevedon."

And before she could answer him, he took her hand and grasped it firmly. Then, as if ashamed of his sudden expansion, he became even stiffer and graver than before; and when, as she was leaving, she murmured something about being sorry to have detained him so long, he bent his head ceremoniously, and saying, "I will let you know if I hear anything. Good afternoon," motioned to one of the clerks to open the doors for her, and disappeared into his sanctum.

For days after this interview, Silvia expected letters containing wonderful

offers by every post, but no letters came. Mr. Johnson consulted his mate in the mason's yard where he worked, and bade Mrs. Johnson tell Silvia that the gentleman was sure not to forget her, for he had been so kind to the mate's wife.

But Silvia could not hope that he would be very kind to her—his manner had been so curt and stiff, his voice so satirical and hard; and then again his hearty grasp of her hand, his sudden momentary enthusiasm, would recur to her, to puzzle her once more.

In the mean time the days were drawing so near to Christmas that she gave up hoping for anything before that sacred season of eating and drinking had passed.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I SUPPOSE, miss, you will be at home to-morrow, the same as usual?" said Mrs. Johnson, breaking in upon Silvia late in the afternoon of Christmas Eve.

Silvia smiled somewhat sadly. "Indeed, I shall," she replied; adding, "You can give me my dinner when you like; don't let me interfere with your enjoyment in any way."

"Thank you kindly, miss," answered Mrs. Johnson; "but I don't think we shall have over much enjoyment our-

selves. Johnson has asked two of his mates to have a bit of supper with us, at half-past seven; but he seems out of sorts altogether himself, and I'm afraid they will only get quarrelling. Don't you think about trouble to me, however, miss, for I haven't so much more to do than usual, and the lady where Annie goes to hold the baby, she's gone down into the country for two or three days, so Annie will be at home, and is a great help to me. She looks very pale, though, of an evening when it's all over, the schooling and the nursing and all. The children misses the country air."

"By-the-by," said Silvia, "I want you to send little Annie up to me. I am going to take her out, if she would like to come."

"Like to come? Bless your heart, why, she'll fly if I tell her you want her," replied Mrs. Johnson.

"Then it's settled," said Silvia. "Send her up to me as soon as you possibly can."

And in a few moments the child appeared, duly cleaned and polished and tidied, her little face all aglow with satisfaction.

"We are going out to do some wonderful things," said Silvia to Annie, "and you must be a good girl, and must step along bravely. No, Tartar, you can't come too," she added, as the dog stretched and shook himself with the evident intention of joining his mistress; "you must stay at home by the fireside."

Tartar whined and looked at Silvia

with imploring eyes; but she was relentless, and went out into the busy streets alone with Annie.

They wound their way through the miserable by-streets between Oxford Street and Charing Cross, little Annie in a whirl of delight at the honour she was enjoying in walking side by side with Miss Clevedon. The thoroughfares were crowded with people, among whom Silvia had occasionally some difficulty in making her way. There were groups of stalwart, ragged women, bare-headed in spite of the weather, their arms folded defiantly; their unkempt hair gathered in an indiscribable bundle at the back of their heads, and loose ends of it floating about; their faces wearing every shade of ignorant misery, and bearing only too frequently

the traces of a brutal blow. Silvia's compassionate glance fell on one of those women so disfigured, whose young face told a plain tale of dissolute recklessness and suffering. The woman saw Silvia's look, and cried with a coarse laugh, and jerking her head towards the violets Silvia had bought, only a few moments before, from an imploring child—

"Give us some of them flowers; they'll match the colour of Jim's mark."

One or two of the women standing about, who heard the insolent tone of this appeal, gave vent to a noisy laugh; but Silvia instantly put the flowers into the woman's hand without a word, with only a glance and a smile. The whole expression of the disfigured face changed instantly, and in the woman's utter sur-

prise, she never said, "Thank you," but raised the flowers mechanically to smell them, gazing at Silvia with softened bewilderment. Silvia was sufficiently thanked, however, by that look, and passed on quickly with Annie. She turned round in a few moments to glance at "Jim's" victim, whom she perceived walking thoughtfully and slowly across the street, her bare head, with its rough hair and poor bruised face, bent over the sweet-smelling violets that were blooming at Christmas time, giving their fresh pure scent alike to the poor and to the rich. Who can say how much good those few flowers may have effected in "Jim's" one room in that miserable court? Who can calculate the influences of the violet's modest beauty and delicate odour upon

a nature not corrupt, but debased by the hard pressure of circumstances and companions? Who can know that the gift of flowers, together with the look and smile that accompanied them, did not awaken reminiscences of younger and better days, of a childhood in the country, of a gentle mother, or a dead sister? It is impossible to foresee the effects of one little glimpse of kindness in the rough world in which the poor live. Kindness is more wide-spread in its influence than harshness, for the one is so much rarer than the other!

Annie was very silent after this incident; she was adding an inch or two to the pinnacle on which she had placed Miss Clevedon in her small mind. It was Miss Clevedon herself who broke the silence at last.

"Well, Annie," she said, as the strange pair burst from the restraint of Long Acre into the broad expanse of Trafalgar Square, "are you not wondering where you are being taken?"

"No, miss," she answered; "I was thinking about them violets you gave to that woman."

"But you will have to think about something very different in a few minutes," said Silvia.

They walked quickly on, and presently Silvia took the child into all the confusion and bustle and light of Lowther Arcade. The place was crowded with people—with portly mothers, boisterous children, and solemn fathers; with timid girls and raw boys; with many quiet women of the governess type, who

were evidently on the look out for little presents, the purchase of which would be within their modest means. The hum of human voices was indescribable, and the noise of other voices that were most certainly not human—tin voices, brass voices, wooden voices, leather voices—was ear-splitting. All sorts of antediluvian animals were being displayed and worked by eager young ladies presiding at the stalls in front of the shops. Dolls with eyes that opened and shut, dolls that executed squeaks solemnly declared to be the words "papa" and "mamma," that were able to turn their heads in a somewhat spasmodic manner, and not strictly in accordance with the human anatomical arrangements, that had real hair and dainty waxen feet and hands, were hung

in brilliant rows, their bodies wrapped in tissue paper, and only their curly heads being visible to tempt the childish fancy; glass and china ware of gay and gaudy descriptions glittered in profusion; children's books in crimson-and-gold and blue-and-gold binding, with roughly coloured illustrations of the time-honoured legends of Bluebeard, Cinderella, Jack the Giant Killer, etc., lay upon the counters; and everywhere, on every side, were toys of all kinds, of all sizes, of all prices—from the majestic rocking-horse, standing four feet high, to the penny box of wooden cups and saucers.

Little Annie looked about her in utter bewilderment. She had never seen anything of this kind before, and was dazed

by the light and the crowd, and the noise of merry voices and of laughter.

"Now, Annie," said Silvia, "I want you to choose something for the baby, and something for your sister, and something for yourself. Will you look about all round you and see what you think they would like, and then tell me?"

"Oh, you are so kind, miss," said Annie, half crying in her excitement; "but what shall I do? How am I to choose?"

"Well, take your time, my child," answered Silvia, smiling kindly at Annie's enthusiasm; "only do not choose a rocking-horse, for that would be somewhat difficult to get home."

Very patiently did Silvia go up and down the Arcade with Annie, who could

not make up her mind. She contrived, at last, to settle upon a gorgeous box of bricks for the baby, and then upon a perambulator, with a doll in it, for her little sister.

"And what have you chosen for yourself?" asked Silvia.

Annie seemed nervous in answering.

"I hope you won't mind, miss," she said, earnestly; "it's not quite a toy, because, you see, I'm most too big for a toy now, and I thought it would be more useful to me always. Mother often says she wishes I had one, and it would be so handy to keep all my things in."

"But you haven't told me what it is, dear," said Silvia, looking almost tenderly at the child, whose experience of life

made her feel too old for toys at nine years of age.

Annie drew her gently along the Arcade, and making a dead stop before a shop where the articles displayed were of a utilitarian character, pointed out a work-box gaily fitted up with red satin, and with bodkin, and scissors, and thimble glistening in their places.

"I think I would like a cotton-box better than anything, if you don't mind, miss," the child murmured, evidently afraid that Silvia would depreciate her choice.

But Silvia only smiled gravely, and said she should certainly have it if she really liked it, and Annie's sensations were beyond words.

The young man presiding at the

counter volunteered to supply Silvia with a "cotton-box," as Annie called it, already stocked with cotton and needles, and tape and buttons, and hooks and eyes, etc.

Silvia fell in with his suggestion, and was waiting in the Arcade while the parcel was made up, her purse and the glove she had taken off in her hand, when she heard a fresh young voice close beside her exclaim—

"Oh, papa, there's Philip's friend, Miss Clevedon."

Silvia glanced, involuntarily, in the direction whence the voice came, and met the gaze of a pair of earnest dark blue eyes, by which she instantly recognized Effie Royle. It was not possible for her to do otherwise than bow, and as

she did so, she remembered vividly her meeting with Effie at the opera, the awkward scene in the grand hall, and Royle's words at parting. How far off it all seemed to her!

Effie's first impulse had been to address her brother's friend; but her father had drawn her back, and Miss Clevedon evidently did not wish to speak, she thought, so she contented herself with returning the nod; and giving Silvia one of her pretty pensive smiles, and a final glance, she passed on with her father.

"Now, Annie, we must be extravagant, and have a cab," said Silvia, putting aside her retrospective thoughts for the moment. "We could never carry all these things home; and we will take them

to the entrance of the Arcade, and call a cab there."

So this interval of what seemed to Annie fairyland, was appropriately closed to her young mind by a ride in a cab; and if she had been whirled back to Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, in a chariot of gold drawn by the legendary milk-white horses, her delight could not have been keener than at driving through St. Giles's in a musty and tumble-down four-wheeler.

Once in Charlotte Street, Silvia paid the cabmen, let herself and Annie quietly into the house, and before she turned into her parlour, kissed the child kindly, and hoped she and her brother and sister would be pleased.

"Tell your mother to come up to me

for a moment," said she. "And you run down as quick as you can, and give the children their toys."

"Now then, young un," cried Johnson, as Annie skipped down the kitchen stairs. "Why can't you come along quiet? I was almost asleep, I declare. Why, what have you been up to? what have you got there?" he exclaimed, as Annie entered the kitchen, laden.

"Oh, father, it's Miss Clevedon!" gasped Annie, almost too excited to speak.

"*That* ain't Miss Clevedon," said Johnson, looking towards the three bulky parcels Annie had put down on the floor.

"Where did they come from, Annie, and who are they for?" asked Mrs.

Johnson, advancing towards the fire-place.

"Miss Clevedon bought it all," said Annie. "Oh, and she wants you to go up to the parlour to her for a moment."

Mrs. Johnson went away immediately, and while she was gone, Annie unfolded the treasures before her father and the children. She handed the baby his box of bricks, she gave little Lizzie her perambulator and doll, and then she displayed her "cotton-box" to her father, revelling in the reels and skeins, the packets of needles, the bodkin and thimble, and the sharp and shining scissors.

"Isn't it beautiful, father?" she said, as she fixed all the things in their places. "It's just what I wanted, because I

haven't got anything like a cotton-box, and mother's isn't as nice as this, is it? You know, I should always have wanted one soon, and it seemed foolish for me to have a toy—didn't it, father?—because I'm a big girl now. Isn't it all beautiful, father, and isn't Miss Clevedon kind?"

Johnson muttered something unintelligible, and Mrs. Johnson returning to the kitchen at that moment, with a suspicious redness about her eyes, he took that opportunity of freeing himself from any softness that he might have felt creeping over him.

"You don't mean to say you've been a-crying again now, have you?" he cried to his wife. "I never did see anything like you women folk for crying.

No matter what happens, whether you're pleased or worried, or whether your good man beats you or pets you, I'm hanged if you don't all of you turn on the waterworks. I should like to see the governor's face down at the stone yard, if me and my mates was to set off crying when he give us a half-holiday. What's the matter?"

"Miss Clevedon wanted to give me a Christmas box, to help us along a bit, she said," replied Mrs. Johnson.

"Well, where is it?" said Johnson, determined not to be softened.

"Here it is," said Mrs. Johnson, putting a fold of paper into his hand.

He opened it and saw that it contained three shining sovereigns—three of those solid gold pieces it took him so

long to earn—three of the sterling coins that meant so much ease and comfort, and comparative freedom from anxiety for a time to him and his.

"Devil a bit of the old admiral's character has she got in her!" he exclaimed, flinging the money down on the table towards his wife. And he took up his hat, and went out of the house without another word, only returning in time to see the children before they were put to bed.

When Silvia came into her little parlour to her solitary breakfast on Christmas morning, she saw on the table a letter, and a huge bunch of wild blossoms and buds and leaves, that reminded her instantly of her old home in Hampshire. She lifted the picturesque

nosegay before she looked at the letter; she examined the glistening green leaves and the feathery fir-branches, and the very scent of them seemed to have a special reminiscence of Lyndwood.

"How did these get here, Mrs. Johnson?" asked Silvia, as her landlady brought in her breakfast.

"Well, miss," said Mrs. Johnson, hesitatingly, "it was Johnson who thought of it. He remembered how fond you always was of the grasses and greenery that grows about in the forest, and he couldn't venture to offer you a present; so he just got one of his friends at Lyndwood to get him a fine bunch, and to send it up by the railway guard, and Johnson went to meet the train. It isn't much, miss, but it's well meant."

"It's everything to me," said Silvia, grasping Mrs. Johnson's hand. "I thank you both with all my heart."

In a moment or two, she turned to her letter. The handwriting was strange to her, and she tore open the envelope with very little interest. The letter ran—

"38, Chancery Lane.

"DEAR MADAM,

"I am glad to say that I think I shall have something to offer you in the first weeks of the New Year. I should be pleased if you would call on me on the afternoon of the 3rd of January, that we may talk matters over. With best wishes for the season,

"Believe me, dear madam,

"Yours faithfully,

"ANDREW GRAEME."

This letter had the effect that Mr. Graeme had perhaps intended: it buoyed Silvia up for the whole day. She sat alone through the long hours with something like hope in her heart; she formed the wildest plans, she indulged in the vainest dreams, she made the bravest resolves, as she sat by the fire, listening mechanically to the noise and laughter below—to the shouts of the children, the singing and cheering of Johnson's "mates," when they came in to supper. And, finally, the Christmas Day that she had dreaded passed away easily enough; and when she lay down to rest at night, the songs from below still echoing in her ears, and asked herself what it was that had really brightened her day, she was obliged to own that it was the letter

from the man she had been encouraging herself to abhor, and the simple forest nosegay from the neighbourhood of her old home.

If she had only known of the tender thoughts hovering about her! That Christmas afternoon, when Effie Royle wandered into the library of Laurel Lodge just before dinner, she found her brother there.

"Oh, Philip," she cried, "I am so glad to find you quite alone. I have something to tell you which I am sure you will be pleased to hear."

"Have you, dear?" said Royle, languidly. "Tell me quickly then, before some one comes."

"Why, Philip," said Effie, coming and standing close beside him as he stood

at the mantelpiece, "whom do you think I saw yesterday?"

"I really don't know," said Royle. "Tell me: I can't guess."

"Some one whom you know very well—whom you admired very much, I am sure," said Effie. "Some one whom I saw at the opera, Philip."

"Miss Clevedon, was it? I beg her pardon—Mrs. Jocelyn?" said Philip, hurriedly.

"Yes, it was Miss Clevedon," said Effie; and she put one hand on her brother's arm, and whispered, "And, Philip, you needn't beg her pardon, for she is not Mrs. Jocelyn or Mrs. anything."

"How do you know?" cried Royle, his face flushing and his eyes lighting.

"She had her glove off," said Effie gently, "and I saw her hand. She had no wedding ring on; and oh, Philip, she looked so pale and thin, so altered!"

"Dinner is ready, sir," said the servant, opening the library door; and the brother and sister went into the dining-room together.

Royle's heart was lighter that evening than it had been for many weeks; and when all the merriment was over, and he said good-night to his father and sisters, he whispered to Effie, "Thanks, little Effie, for your news! It has brightened Christmas for me."

CHAPTER IX.

The 3rd of January was the opening of a new era in Silvia's life. The second week in the New Year found Silvia solemnly engaged at a regular salary, to work for her living. Mr. Graeme had told her of a post that was vacant in the administration of the "Society for the Protection of Workwomen." He told her the objects of the society, which were to promote the fair remuneration of labour, to establish equal and moderate working hours, to afford mutual

help in time of sickness and of want of work, and to give information as to where work might be had; he gave her a sketch of the duties she would have to perform as secretary to the society; he mentioned with singular delicacy the figure of the salary, without telling that he had volunteered to pay thirty pounds sterling of that salary, at all events for the first year; and when, finally, after due questions and instructions, he asked Silvia if it would suit, she could hardly answer him, so strong was her emotion, so deep her gratitude. She reminded him, before the matter was concluded, that in accepting the post, she could give the society no references; and he had smiled grimly, and said he had recommended her, and that no further refer-

ence would be needed by the little band of thoughtful men and women who had leagued themselves together to protect and help working women.

"I must not only thank you with all my heart and soul," said Silvia to Mr. Graeme, as she was leaving, "but I must apologize to you for the harsh and unjust opinion I had formed of you. I see fully my own short-sightedness, and shall not easily forgive myself for having done you a moment's injustice even in thought."

He smiled again a cold, stiff smile, and bent his head formally, as he muttered "Good-bye;" but he pressed the hand she held out to him with marked cordiality, and when she had gone he said to himself, "That is a brave and honest woman!"

The offices of the "Society for the Protection of Workwomen" were in Dean Street, High Holborn, and were decidedly humble in detail. The society only owned two large rooms on the ground-floor. In the first of these, the walls of which were lined with book-shelves containing the society's library, was the secretary's table, on which stood a large desk and envelope-case, piles of prospectuses, catalogues of the books, forms for subscription, pamphlets, and copies of various journals of the trades to which the members belonged. In the further room, which was separated from the first by folding doors that were thrown wide open on grand occasions, were rows of chairs and benches, and a massive table for committee-meetings.

In these two rooms was a little world apart from the noise and vice and glitter of the immediate neighbourhood. The working women of London who were anxious to improve their social as well as their industrial position, had here an effectual means; and the friends of the working folk who had formed the society originally, were indescribably pleased to see how their idea prospered,—how the number of subscribers increased; how the modest entertainments that they provided —lectures, readings, meetings, teas, social gatherings—throve; how ready the working women were to make an attempt at self-improvement. There were dressmakers, tailoresses, bookbinders, upholsteresses, florists, and umbrella-makers among the members of the society; and

it was a refreshing sight to many lovers of the human race to see these women gathered happily round the homely tea-table on social evenings, enjoying a general chat and a little mild jocularity, and varying the conversational element with a song or two from the members who were able, or thought they were able, to sing.

As may be imagined, Silvia rapidly became a favourite among all these persons. The founders of the society liked her because they perceived at a glance that she was a lady, and also they were disposed to like any one recommended by Mr. Graeme. There was something so quiet, so well-bred about Miss Clevedon, they all said. She knew instantly what was wanted; she knew

what to say and how to say it; she could put the most tiresome meaning into a few concise words, immediately; she knew the contents of the volumes on the society's book-shelves by heart, and she could discuss the general tone and influence of the author's writings. On the whole, Miss Clevedon was a decided acquisition, said the promoters of the society, and it was fortunate that Mr. Graeme had been able to secure her services.

With the workwomen, Silvia had no difficulty; from the first time that they saw her, they liked her, and her behaviour to them could not fail to increase the liking. Many were the tales of struggle and temptation brought to Silvia's ears; many were the lamentations, the

grievances, the petty troubles and trials confided to her; many were the hearts she cheered, the sorrows she soothed. The girls would run into the room in which were the secretary's desk and table, and would lean confidentially over the table to tell Silvia the various incidents of their daily life on which they wanted her advice. The first question many of them asked, as they filtered one by one into the rooms, when there was a social or industrial gathering, was—"Is Miss Clevedon here?" And in spite of their boundless confidential familiarity, their eagerness to have a laugh and a joke with Silvia, these workwomen all recognized her superiority; they saw that she was many degrees above them in everything, and they respected her, while they had

a liking amounting almost to love for her.

Silvia, too, with her large powers of sympathy, grew deeply interested in the lives of those around her. She knew and remembered the stories of each of the women, and was to be heard asking this one after her mother, and that one after her husband. She saw all the difficulties and trials that beset the poor work-girl who is trying to make an honest livelihood, she realized the severity of the struggle between good and evil, and she helped, with all her strength, to make the narrow path of duty pleasant and profitable to the young pilgrims who consulted her.

Silvia did not see Mr. Graeme for more than a fortnight after her appointment

to the secretaryship of the Society for the Protection of Workwomen; and during that fortnight she had learned how kind and generous was the heart that beat beneath the unsympathetic, rough exterior. Every one connected with the society had a story to tell of his goodness, his readiness to give time and trouble and money in a deserving cause; every face shone when his name was mentioned; every voice was eloquent in his praise. It was true that he looked stern and cold, that he spoke severely, often even harshly; that he seemed sometimes to freeze all the human warmth in one's heart, they owned; but those who knew him overlooked these peculiarities, because of the real warmth, the faithful courage, the noble zeal underlying them.

And so Silvia grew to like the stern Scotchman as much as she had once thought she disliked him.

It was on the evening appointed for a little discussion on the accounts of the society, that Mr. Graeme first saw Silvia at her post. He came into the room very early, when only one or two women were present, and he walked straight up to the secretary's desk, and sat down on a bench close by her.

"How do you like your work, Miss Clevedon?" he said. "How long do you think it will be before you are thoroughly tired of it?"

"I don't think I shall get tired of it at all," said Silvia, raising her eyes frankly to meet his keen, steady gaze. "I am so interested in it, that it is impossible ever to like it less."

"Are you really interested in the lives you see around you?" asked Mr. Graeme, gravely.

"Indeed, I am," replied Silvia. "I was always deeply interested in the working men and women, in the poor people and the ignorant people, who find life so hard and bitter."

"But I thought you belonged to the classes who would recommend the poor to eat cakes, when there is no bread?" said Mr. Graeme. "How did you happen to acquire sympathy for the working masses of the population?"

"I think it came naturally to me," said Silvia. "At any rate, I am interested and happy here among the work-people, and I am inexpressibly grateful to you. I don't know why you should have been

so kind to me, but I am, nevertheless, deeply sensible of your kindness."

"I was inclined to assist you for two reasons," said Mr. Graeme, calmly. "In the first place, because you preferred your principles to your wealth; and in the second place, because you did not blush when I made allusion to your good looks, which showed me you were a woman of sense."

Silvia must have fallen immediately in his estimation, for the blood rushed to her face as he spoke, and she seemed so confused at the untimeliness of the speech, that he got up and left her to recover herself, while he talked to one of the women. He came back to her repeatedly as the room filled, bringing the various members of the committee to introduce to her.

"Have you spoken to Mr. Hurst yet?" he asked Silvia, after one of these introductions.

"Is Mr. Hurst here?" said Silvia, eagerly.

"Yes; there he is," answered Mr. Graeme, pointing to a slim, delicate-looking young man, with a gentle, refined face, and earnest expression and manner, who wore the clerical long coat and white band round the throat. "And a model clergyman he is, Miss Clevedon. He spends his life among the poor. He works among them; he lives in a house with the poor around him on every side, in the rooms above him, in the parlours beneath him. He is mixed up with all the associations such as this for the bettering of the condition of working men

and women. His name is on every committee that the work folk swear by, and throughout the length and breadth of his broad parish of poor people, he is respected and loved because of his toleration, his humanity, and his entire good fellowship with the humblest of his parishioners."

In a moment Mr. Hurst came across the room, in answer to a sign from Graeme, and on being introduced to Silvia, said earnestly—

"I cannot tell you how much pleasure it gives me when I see a lady interested and willing to work in our organizations for the working people. As a rule, you know, it is much easier to arouse the sympathies of men than those of women on such questions, and I find I can get

twenty gentlemen to help where I cannot get one lady."

"That is the fault of their education greatly, I believe," said Silvia. "If there were more equality in the instruction given to boys and girls, the sympathies of the men and women would harmonize more than is possible now."

Mr. Hurst looked somewhat astonished at the style and the sentiment of the answer, which were not quite what he had expected from a salaried secretary, and he bent his eyes thoughtfully on Silvia's face as he observed, "Then you are a firm friend of the people? You are entirely with us?"

"Entirely," said Silvia, her face lighting up as she spoke.

From that evening her place was secure

in the society. She had contrived, she never knew how, to will general good will, and in one or two quarters she found firm friends.

"How did you come across Miss Clevedon, Graeme?" said the young clergyman, as he and his friend stood at the door of the society's rooms, when the discussion was over, and the women were trooping out of the place.

"She came to me," said Graeme, "and from her account of herself I liked her, and was confident that she might be trusted. It's a pure speculation, I warn you."

"She looks thoughtful and clever," said Mr. Hurst. "I hope she will keep to the society."

At that moment Silvia brushed quickly

by them, with a swift "Good night," and went out into the dark street.

The two men looked after her. They heard her call gently as if to a dog, and they saw Tartar's big black figure spring up as if out of the earth, and run along, bounding and leaping, by her side.

"She is well protected," said Mr. Hurst, solemnly. "She has her own brave spirit."

"And the dog!" added the grim Scotchman.

CHAPTER X.

Spring was in the height of its glory. The brilliant sunlight of an April afternoon was flooding the dingy dreariness of Dean Street, High Holborn, as a neat little brougham rolled along the narrow roadway, and drew up in front of the offices of the Society for the Protection of Workwomen. A young man, faultlessly dressed, sprang out of it and strode to the doorway, over which the name of the society was placarded. As he entered, a boy came from some remote depths, and asked him whom he wished to see.

"I want the secretary of this Society for the Protection of Women, or whatever its proper name may be," said the visitor.

The boy stepped forward, threw open the door of the first room, which was the secretary's sanctum, and crying, "Miss Clevedon, here's a gentleman wants you," ushered the visitor into the secretary's presence, and retired.

Silvia looked up from her desk and her pile of letters giving notice of meetings, and dropped her pen in her utter surprise.

"Why, Gilbert!" she cried, advancing with a bright smile and with outstretched hand. "I can hardly believe my own eyes."

"And I can hardly believe mine, I can assure you," returned Jocelyn (for it was

he). "You can't be half so surprised as I am."

"If you won't shake hands with me," said Silvia, "I shall say that no one on earth can ever be so surprised as I shall be."

Her laugh was irresistible, and Jocelyn clasped her hand with remarkable warmth, considering that he had appeared reluctant to take it a moment before.

"Won't you sit down, Gilbert?" said Silvia. "Here is a bench for you; or stay, I will take the bench for a change, and you shall have my official chair;" and she pushed the solid armchair towards him.

But he did not look inclined to sit down and make himself at home in the dingy office.

"I can't talk to you in this hole, Silvia," he said, testily, "with, I presume, a crowd of ragged women peeping through every chink, and innumerable small boys listening at the door."

Silvia laughed. "My dear Gilbert," she said, "do you suppose that the people about the place are totally unaccustomed to the sight of a gentleman? If the Lord Mayor in all his robes, his 'tinsel show and a' that,' were to come here in the broad daylight, a few persons might assemble about the offices, but a gentleman *pur et simple* is common enough to the minds of the ragged women and small boys in the vicinity. There is really no reason why you should not talk to me here just as freely as you wish. First of all, tell me how you found me out?"

"Very simply," answered Jocelyn, with a sharpness in his tone and manner that Silvia had never noticed in him before. "Some one had left a notice of a meeting in a railway carriage which brought me from Sydenham to London yesterday afternoon. I glanced casually at it, and saw the name of the secretary, 'S. Clevedon,' affixed to a postscript requesting people to bring their own chairs or their own lights, or some ignoble directions of the kind."

"It was a note requesting members to bring their subscription books, which is not an ignoble direction at all," answered Silvia, quietly.

"Of course, I guessed that S. Clevedon meant Silvia Clevedon. Clevedon is not a common name," continued Jocelyn,

"and I knew the workwomen dodge would be sure to have attracted you. Still, I half suspected when I drove up here to find that I had made an egregious blunder, and that S. Clevedon was some strong-minded eyesore, who went in for the rights of workwomen because she had been unable to get a husband."

"You have not altered in one respect, at all events," said Silvia, with a smile.

"Altered? No; why should I?" returned Jocelyn. "I only wish I could say as much for you. I always knew, of course, that you had wild ideas, and were quite rampant on what you called democratic questions, but I did not think you would drag your name down into the dirt."

"How dare you say that?" exclaimed

Silvia, starting to her feet, her eyes flashing and her face glowing. "How dare you speak to me in such insulting terms? You for——"

"By dragging your name into the dirt," interrupted Jocelyn, "I mean having it handled by all these people in this place, in this squalid hole into which your father would not have put his foot. I don't care what you say; I maintain that you are dishonouring your name."

"I am *not* dishonouring it now," retorted Silvia, "but I should have been had I consented to marry in order to retain my fortune, as you wished me to do."

"That's a kind and generous hint, and I thank you," said Jocelyn.

"I am sorry if I wounded you, Gilbert,"

said Silvia, more gently. "You never think how your words will hurt me, and it is but natural that I should answer you in your own vein. You treat me and the work I am doing with supreme contempt, but the contempt is all a pure matter of prejudice. You know nothing of my work, you know nothing of the society, and you might at least be silent respecting that of which you are ignorant. You think, I know, that women ought to have no interest in, no knowledge of, the miserable byways of life; that those among them whom you term ladies ought to sit in dainty drawing-rooms, all day, a brilliant mass of silk and lace, and curls and powder, and perfume, only capable of talking scandal and taking the head of their husband's tables. You are

quite content that women should remain in this state from generation to generation, and you do not wish any effort to be made to improve them. But there are men who have different ideas—who think of women as something better than a doll, to which a man gives his name, on which he hangs his family jewels, and which he displays to his friends on special occasions, as a costly piece of decorative furniture. There are men who believe that a woman—a lady, if you like the term better——"

"I do," said Jocelyn, shortly.

"Can work for her living among poor people, who respect her, and whom she respects, without losing a shred of dignity or of honour," continued Silvia. "I have been at work here since January,

and I have experienced nothing but kindness from every one connected with the society. Every one has been willing to help me where I was ignorant, and I only hope the "ragged women" about the place like me as well as I like them. And now, Gilbert, leave the matter alone, I beg of you. Nothing would induce me to leave my present post; and I am perfectly convinced that if my dear mother and father could see me day by day, and could know all my thoughts and feelings and experiences, they would thoroughly approve of my secretaryship, even though I be a Clevedon. Tell me what you have been doing since I left Lyndwood?"

"Oh, not much," mumbled Jocelyn, his thoughts evidently far away as he

spoke. "I have been wandering about the continent, and stayed a long time at Monaco. Lost a lot of money at first, and then had to wait until I had won it all back, with a little supplement into the bargain, to make up for lost time. I ran down to Lyndwood the other day, to see how the place looked. Everything seems just as it was left. Mrs. Wildham, or Wildston, or whatever the name may be, cried, of course, when she asked after you; and, by-the-by, she told me that your old pet, Tartar, disappeared a few days after you left. Poor brute! I suppose he died by the roadside somewhere or other; he has never been seen down there since."

"He is here in London, with me," said Silvia. "He came bounding up to

me one evening in Parliament Street, soon after my arrival, and has been with me ever since, a true friend in good and bad times."

"So would I have been if you would have let me," cried Jocelyn, pacing restlessly about the room. "But you went off and left me in the greatest suspense and anxiety about you. So what could a fellow do? Directly I had some sort of clue to your whereabouts, I came here, and I hoped to persuade you to go back to Lyndwood, at all events for a time. It is absurd that I should have your father's money, and that you should be working at this place for— — How much is it you get?"

"A little over thirty shillings a week," said Silvia.

"Good God! do you mean to say that you live upon that?" cried Jocelyn, aghast.

"Very nearly; and I have a very fair share of my three hundred pounds left, from which I take what is wanting," said Silvia, tranquilly. "I shall have more next year, if the society still prosper and still employ me. I am comfortable enough, I can assure you, Gilbert; you mustn't distress yourself about me. I always longed to work for my living, years ago, when I was a mere child, and you would not deny me the pleasure of that one realized dream——"

"I would not deny you anything that pleases you," said Jocelyn, moodily. "It is you who have always denied me everything."

"Oh, Gilbert!" exclaimed Silvia, laughingly. "Think of the flags I have made for you, the paper soldiers I have cut out, the tin soldiers I have tried to mend, the tails of kites I have manufactured, the cricket caps I have resewn, the books I have read aloud, and all, all for you!"

"Yes, you were good enough to me when I was a boy," said Jocelyn; "but that's no consolation to me now."

He looked so downcast as he spoke that Silvia fancied there must be something wrong with him, and she asked him frankly if he had any special reason for needing consolation.

"Oh, there's nothing particular the matter," he murmured; "but I can't bear to see you in this place, and hear you

talking about working for your living. It's awful that things should have happened so, and that you won't let me help you in any way. Do you live here?" he asked, turning suddenly round to face Silvia.

"No," said Silvia.

"Will you tell me where you live?" he asked.

"Certainly. Why not?" rejoined Silvia; and she gave him her address, which he wrote in his pocket-book.

"I have told you where I live," said Silvia, "in all confidence, you know, Gilbert, that you will not presume upon the knowledge."

"I understand," said Jocelyn, grimly: "you don't want to see me too often."

"What nonsense, Gilbert," said Silvia,

decisively. "You know quite well that I mean nothing of the kind. I do not want you to be continually calling at my lodgings, because it might get known here, and would have a very bad effect."

"I won't call at all, if that will satisfy you," said Jocelyn.

At this juncture, the door was thrown open, the boy peering in the room before he closed it after the intruder with a certain gleam of malice on his face, and Mr. Hurst entered. He drew back in some confusion when he saw Silvia's companion; but Silvia cried quickly—

"Do not go away, Mr. Hurst, but let me introduce you to an old friend and playmate of mine, who is my brother, in fact, in all but name. Mr. Hurst, Mr. Jocelyn."

The men gave a rapid glance at each other when they had bowed, Jocelyn meeting Hurst's eloquent, earnest eyes with a contemptuous expression that Silvia noted with much displeasure.

"I am very glad to meet you," said Mr. Hurst. "Any friend of Miss Clevedon's would always find a sure welcome here, and——"

"You are very good," interrupted Jocelyn, curtly. "I must wish you good afternoon now, for I am leaving. Good-bye, Silvia," he added, his face and voice softening as he turned to her.

"Good-bye, Gilbert," she answered, gravely, without an indication of a smile.

And he felt that she was angry with him, that he had done no good in seeing her, that he could never persuade her

to return to more conventional habits of living, and that he had not behaved as a gentleman should to the unfortunate person who had broken in upon the interview.

When he had left, Silvia said to Mr. Hurst, "I am excessively sorry that my friend has discovered me, and came down here to find fault with me, and I am heartily ashamed of his behaviour to you. His only excuse is that he is a thoughtless, careless person, who imagines the men and women who are not in his own 'set' to be outlaws. He thinks that we are without the pale of civilization."

If Mr. Hurst had been inclined to resent Jocelyn's rudeness, Silvia's speech, and her natural delicacy in using the word "we" in her last sentence, had

won him over completely. He accepted the apology, and dismissed the subject with the innate ease and dignity which were natural to him, and began to talk to Silvia on the affairs of the society, which had brought him thither.

But the effects of Jocelyn's visit did not subside so rapidly as Silvia had hoped, and four or five days after his inopportune call, Silvia had to face an unpleasant position it had brought about.

Among the members of the society was a young girl of about nineteen, named Lucy Britton, who had taken a great fancy to Silvia, and whom Silvia almost loved, so strong was her interest, so deep her anxiety for the girl's welfare. Lucy Britton was a dressmaker; that is to say, she worked all day at a

large dressmaking establishment, having chosen to live by her needle rather than by domestic service. Her mother kept a greengrocer's shop, and her father was an expert in the vague art of "odd jobs," and when they were sober, Lucy's home was comfortable enough. But, at times, both parents had a regular bout of intemperance, and there was much quarrelling, much bad language, and even fighting at poor Lucy's own fireside, that had a pernicious effect on the girl's nature. With all the desire in the world to be quiet and modest, Lucy could not sit at home night after night when her parents were suffering from one of these attacks; she was driven out of doors by a force which no one could deny. She accompanied one or

two of her companions of the workroom to the music-halls of the district, and there she had met a young man—a telegraph clerk—who had offered her various refreshments, and who had begged her to accompany him to other and, to use his term, "spicier" music-halls. This young gentleman was very contemptuous indeed about Lucy's parents, and suggested to Lucy, more forcibly than elegantly, that it would be better for her to "pitch them overboard, and let them scramble along the best way they could."

It was just at this stage that a more serious fellow-worker took Lucy to one of the meetings of the Society for the Protection of Workwomen. Lucy had suddenly conceived a romantic liking for Silvia. Silvia had asked her why she

did not join the society; and Lucy, in a fit of enthusiasm, had joined, and had, moreover, been regular in her attendance, enjoying, above all things, a brief conversation with Silvia over the secretary's desk. Bit by bit she had told Silvia her simple story, and Silvia had done her best to keep the girl straight amid the temptations that beset her. Lucy's nature was a light and careless one, capable of but few deep and lasting impressions. Silvia had taken firm root, however, in the susceptible, ever-changing heart, and Lucy's future seemed to lie almost in the hands of the young secretary.

The meeting, for which preparations were going forward when Jocelyn called, was held four days later, satisfactorily

enough. The only thing that annoyed Silvia somewhat was that Lucy Britton did not come. However, she would not distress herself much, hoping that it was forgetfulness, nothing more. The day after the meeting, as she sat in the office in the afternoon over her papers and reports, and resolutions and amendments, there was a tap at the door; and in answer to Silvia's cry, "Come in," Miss Britton made her appearance, much to Silvia's astonishment.

"Why, Lucy!" she exclaimed—she had long ago fallen into the habit of calling her pretty *protégée* by her pretty name—"are you not at work to-day?"

"No, miss, that I'm not," the girl replied. "I was so tired and sleepy

this morning, I couldn't get up for the life of me, so I've missed my day's work."

As she spoke, she came and sat down on the bench close by Silvia, and Silvia saw that there were traces of fatigue on her face, that generally beamed with the *beauté du diable.* Silvia touched her cheek with her finger, and said gently—

"Lucy, Lucy, what have you been doing?"

"I have only been amusing myself a bit, that's all," answered the girl, almost defiantly. "*He* wanted me to go out somewhere, and he took me to a fine place right up Islington way, and gave me some champagne he said it was; anyhow, it made my head ache dreadfully, and I was very glad to get home, and to get to bed."

"Oh, Lucy!" said Silvia, with a sigh. "If some one else had told me that you had given in to that young man's persuasions after all, I should not have believed it."

"Well, miss, if you are disappointed in me, I'm sure I was disappointed enough in you!" said Lucy Britton, frankly.

"How was that, Lucy?" said Silvia, quietly.

"Why, you have always talked to me so much about keeping quiet and steady, and I always took every word for gospel truth," said Lucy, moodily; "but when I heard of the gentlemen driving here in their carriages to see you, and stopping here ever so long quite alone with you, and calling you by your Christian

name, and you calling them by their Christian names, and putting 'dear' afterwards, and they rushing away directly Mr. Hurst came, and nobody ever saying that they'd come for business,—why, then I thought I might just go out for the evening with a young man and no harm. It's not worse to sit in the music-hall listening to the songs than to sit in this room, I suppose?"

"I don't know who has told you all this," said Silvia. "They have given you a fairly accurate account, with the exception of one point—that you speak of gentlemen, of several; whereas only one gentleman has been to see me here apart from business. Shall I tell you who that gentleman was, Lucy?" And here Silvia related briefly the circum-

stances of her father's disposal of his money; of her rejection of Jocelyn; of her journey to London; and, finally, of Jocelyn's calling upon her to urge her to return to her home and fortune.

"He called me Silvia, and I called him Gilbert. I believe I did say, once or twice, my 'dear Gilbert,' because I have known him ever since I can remember any one, Lucy," said Silvia, gravely; "because he seems to me like my brother; because we have played the same games, read the same books, visited the same places and the same people; in short, because we have been thoroughly good friends, and playmates, and companions through all our younger and happiest days. He kept a carriage waiting, because he is a rich man, and can

afford to have carriages and horses of his own; and he left directly Mr. Hurst came, because he was irritated and angry at my refusing to give up my post here, and he did not feel inclined to talk to a stranger. That is all, Lucy. Don't you think that might be proclaimed from the housetops, without doing me harm?"

By this time the girl had bent her head; and, worn out by the excitement of the previous evening, her hazy, troubled rest, and her remorse through the day, and touched by Miss Clevedon's kindness, was fairly crying, her hands before her face.

"Don't cry, poor girl," said Silvia, softly; "there's no harm done, is there? only a little thoughtlessness; and we will try to forget all about this."

Lucy was still crying as she rose from the bench, and said, brokenly, "Oh, Miss Clevedon, if you would only let me kiss you?"

For all answer, Silvia bent towards her, and kissed her heartily on each cheek.

From that time the sympathy between these two women of such different natures, of such different social sections, was unbroken.

CHAPTER XI.

Matters went on very smoothly after the incident of Jocelyn's visit to the society's offices to see Silvia. Not a word was said to Silvia that might indicate any distrust of her, or disapproval. The patrons and patronesses of the association, who were genuine friends, and came down to the offices frequently to see how affairs were prospering, were as gracious as they had ever been to her; Mr. Graeme and Mr. Hurst were not a whit less kind and considerate; and Silvia might have entirely

forgotten that Jocelyn had ever found her out, had it not been for the constant reminders in the shape of flowers, and books, and the thousand and one trifles a gentleman can give a lady whom he knows well, that reached Charlotte Street from him, and for the melancholy reflections the thought of him induced. Silvia loved Jocelyn sincerely—as she would have loved a brother who had been her companion through her happy childhood, who had teazed her and laughed at her, and shared her every thought and fancy. She had grown gradually up to womanhood without realizing that he was not her brother, and it had taken her some months to realize that he had been growing less fraternal than she had hoped he would be. Of course, the peculiarities of

her father's will accentuated her feelings. If Admiral Clevedon could have contrived to leave Jocelyn penniless, and his daughter sole heiress, it is possible that Silvia's womanly instincts would have taught her to love Jocelyn in a protecting, guiding, encouraging manner, that would not have been a bad foundation to married happiness, considering the weakness and indolence of Jocelyn's character. As affairs actually were, however, Silvia's affection for her old playmate had never risen above, or sunk below, a calm, sincere, and deep sisterly regard. It grieved her terribly that they were so far apart in all ways; that he had no sympathy with her independence, with her work; that he simply thought her a fanatic; and she would have liked to have seen him now

and then, and to have had a friendly conversation, and to have done her best to convince him of her perfect contentment. The presents that were continually coming to her from him brought many sad thoughts to her mind, and made her feel more bitterly the absurdity of the social conventionalities in the midst of which he lived, and which made a woman who worked a thing to be sneered at and scouted.

But an event occurred, presently, that banished Jocelyn from Silvia's mind, for a time.

One evening in the middle of June, when Silvia, having lit her lamp, was poring over some of the volumes on women's labour she made it her duty to read, she was startled by a loud knock

at the street-door, and subsequently by Mrs. Johnson's ushering a gentleman into the parlour.

"Good evening," said Mr. Graeme, for it was he. "I ought to apologize for calling on you, I suppose, but I wished to speak to you, and did not know when it would be possible at the office."

"Come in and sit down, Mr. Graeme," said Silvia, who had long ago grown thoroughly accustomed to the Scotchman's severity, and warmly appreciated his sterling virtues. "I am very glad to see you. I was hard at work, you see."

"I don't doubt it," replied Mr. Graeme, glancing at the volumes on the table, and advancing to take the chair Silvia indicated within reach of the breeze from the open window. "I wish all

young men worked as steadily and conscientiously as certain young women. If it were not for the scandalous tendency of society, I would have lady clerks in my offices, and I am sure they would get on faster with the work."

"And would want less pay, also," suggested Silvia.

"If I employed ladies, and found they did the work as well as men, I should pay them as I pay men," answered Mr. Graeme. "Of course, if they work less well, they deserve less. But I did not come here to discuss the advisability of employing ladies as clerks; I wished to speak to you about one of your *protégées*, Lucy Britton."

"Has anything happened to her?" exclaimed Silvia.

"No; nothing has happened to her as yet," said Mr. Graeme, seriously; "but I think she is on the wrong road, I must say. Now, the question is this: you have unlimited power with her, I believe, and you really ought to exert it, to get her away from some of her bad companions. Mr. Hurst met her last night, he has just told me, in a very disreputable quarter of London, not in the court where he was going on one of his gentle and generous missions, but in the broader, and lighter, and less reputable street. He spoke to her—did not hint at a reproach, but, as he said, delicately reminded her of you by asking her if you were well. She brightened up directly, he said, and told him that she had been promised an order for the theatre, and

asked if he thought you would go with her."

"I hope Mr. Hurst assured her that I would gladly go with her," said Silvia.

"He did not doubt your kindness," said Mr. Graeme; "but he thought, as I did also, that the theatre would be particularly distasteful to you, because you might see there friends of former days, which would be uncomfortable."

"But I have committed no crime," said Silvia, with a smile. "I am not ashamed of the post I occupy, thanks to you, Mr. Graeme; and I am very proud of the support I have won from the society, and of Lucy Britton's confidence in me. I do not mind the risk of seeing people I have known when I was rich; I expect, moreover, that

they will not be at all anxious to recognize me. In any case, I should never think of giving up a chance of doing Lucy some good, because of the possibility of meeting one or two fair-weather friends while I am with her."

"Well, I suppose you are right," Mr. Graeme answered. "Yours is the proper spirit, doubtless, but you must allow that ninety-nine women out of a hundred would dislike the ordeal.

"You are ready to go to the theatre, then, with this girl, if she should ask you?" said Mr. Graeme, after a short pause. "Hurst is afraid that she will not summon up courage to make the suggestion to you, but will take some of her less reputable companions. However, I don't see much use in trying to

keep the girl right; she is sure to go wrong in the end, for, of course, you will not be always on the spot to look after her. It is only a question of time. In fact, I rather agree with a friend of mine, who maintains that women have no principle at all, and would every one of them go to the bad, but that circumstances and habits and surroundings keep a certain number of them straight."

"Even if that were the case, women are not worse than men," said Silvia, with a smile. "But to answer your remarks respecting Lucy Britton. I will take care that she shall ask me to accompany her, and I think, Mr. Graeme, it is of the utmost importance to keep every one from evil as long as possible."

There was a silence for a few moments.

Silvia glanced once or twice at Mr. Graeme, and noticed that he seemed somewhat graver even than usual. At last she said—

"You are unnaturally serious this evening, Mr. Graeme."

"I feel rather depressed, to tell you the truth," he replied, looking vacantly at the shining lamp. "For one thing, Mr. Hurst's practical comment on the young life of London did not inspirit me; and then I met yesterday, at a friend's house, a girl who reminded me very much of some one I knew many years ago." Here his voice fell, and there seemed something like emotion on his impassible countenance. "Her face has haunted me all the day—there was something so eloquent in her eyes—and the sight of

her made me feel young again. I did not dare ask her name, lest it should lead me to discover that the likeness is merely accidental."

Silvia did not answer. She did not dare venture on any sympathetic expression, for she realized that he had made the confidence almost involuntarily, and that a mere word would fall discordantly on his ear, and rudely break up his train of thought. In a few moments he turned to her, and rising as he spoke, said—

"Thank you, Miss Clevedon, for your silence, which shows me that you are not only a woman of sense and a woman of tact, but also a woman of fine feeling. I am not going to detain you any longer now. You have made up your mind, then, about the theatre, I may tell Mr.

Hurst? Good night to you, good night;" and, with something approaching haste and even confusion, Mr. Graeme went away, more impressed than ever with Silvia's unique qualities.

A day or two after this, Lucy Britton was presented by one of her mother's customers with an order for the play, which she took to Silvia in high glee.

"You can't think how glad I am that you are kind enough to go with me," said Lucy, standing beside Silvia's desk, her eyes glistening and her cheeks glowing with excitement.

"Yes, I am very pleased to go with you, Lucy," said Silvia. "I have not been to a theatre for a very long time. How did you get the order?"

"One of the gentlemen that work

inside the theatre deals at mother's, and he gave it to me," said Lucy, "and told me to be sure and be there early; so I must be off to my work, and get it over. I will come for you then, Miss Clevedon, at half-past six, shall I?"

"I shall be ready," replied Silvia; and Lucy Britton went away to her work with a light heart, considerably proud that Silvia was willing to accompany her to so public a place as the upper boxes of a fashionable theatre.

Silvia, on the other hand, was strangely disinclined for the experience. She had slept badly, and had come to her usual work with singular depression of spirits. All the dismal incidents in her life seemed to recur to her, as she sat at her desk, and the theatre was positively distasteful

to her imagination. She was glad to go with her young friend, as she had said, but the knowledge that she would have to spend her whole evening in the glare and heat of the upper boxes, on a fine June night, weighed upon her all day. So little did she care about the treat in store, that she never asked what was being played, or sought out the programme in the daily paper. Her day's duties done, she went homewards lingeringly and slowly, wishing from the bottom of her heart that she could spend the evening quietly over her books.

When half-past six came, bringing Lucy Britton with a beaming face, Silvia reproached herself for her indifference, and endeavoured to enter more into the spirit of the evening. There was no need,

however, for her to exert herself in any attempt at conversation—Lucy kept the ball rolling with indefatigable zeal; and as the strangely assorted pair made their way to the theatre, she entertained Silvia with a full, true, and particular account of the comments of her fellow-workers, and of her parents, on the present expedition, to which Silvia listened good-humouredly. At last Lucy observed—

"They say the piece we are going to see is by a very great man, Miss Clevedon—by Lord Byron."

"Yes, Lord Byron was certainly a great man," answered Silvia, absently.

"And they say the man who acts is a great actor, too," continued Lucy.

"Indeed!" said Silvia; adding, half to herself, "Barry Sullivan, I dare say."

At this moment they reached the theatre doors, and finding they were late, hurried upstairs to their places without a word more. The quarter of an hour's *lever de rideau* was over, and the orchestral music was introducing the representation of Lord Byron's play. Silvia looked round the house with an odd sensation of familiarity and yet of strangeness. It was not only that she had not been for so long, but that everything in her life was so entirely changed that she could hardly realize that society remained totally unchanged—that she alone had shifted, while others remained stationary.

As the music ceased and the curtain rose, she leant back somewhat wearily, and asked Lucy Britton, who was intent

on the programme, the name of the piece.

"It is by Lord Byron," said Lucy, hurriedly, evidently considerably impressed by that fact, "and it's called 'Marino Faliero'—the name of some one, I suppose?"

Silvia nodded in assent, and all but closed her eyes, presently, in her dreamy abstraction. She heard dimly the first short scene; then a burst of applause from roof to basement of the theatre roused her, and in a moment, when she heard Faliero's first lines—

> "Ay, such as the Avogadori did,
> Who sent up my appeal unto the Forty
> To try him by his peers, his own tribunal,"

she started forward in her seat, and looked eagerly on the stage. The tones

of the full deep voice were perfectly familiar to her, and as she gazed at the noble figure of the representative of the Doge, she recognized Philip Royle!

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